THE GIRLS OF ADAM HUGHES!

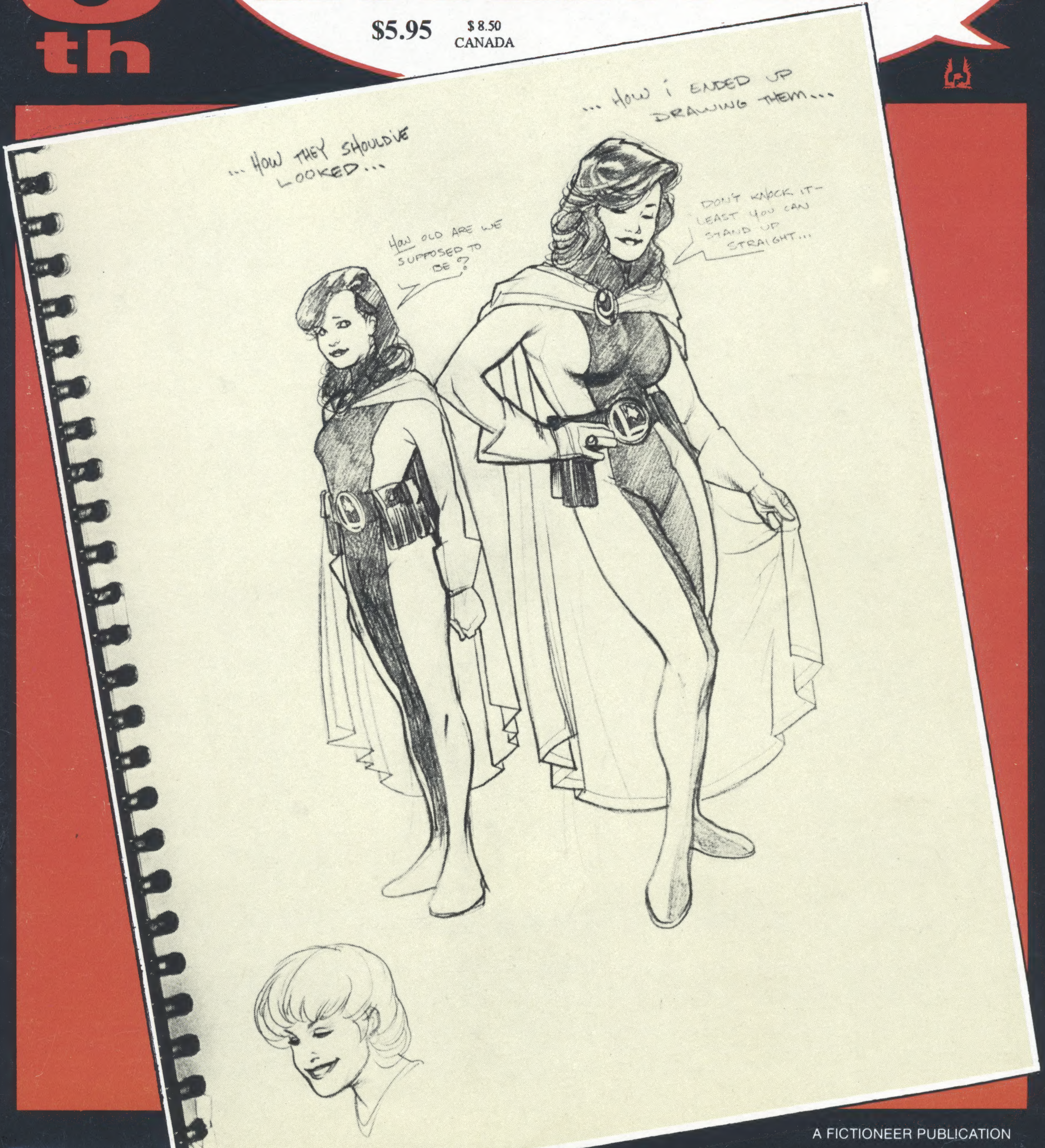
#150

BIG 150th

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

$5.95 $8.50 CANADA


... HOW THEY SHOULD'VE LOOKED...
... HOW I ENDED UP DRAWING THEM...
HOW OLD ARE WE SUPPOSED TO BE?
DON'T KNOCK IT-- LEAST YOU CAN STAND UP STRAIGHT...

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A FICTIONEER PUBLICATION

GOOD GIRLS, BAD GIRLS, BRU-HED™ AND BREATHTAKING BEAUTIES

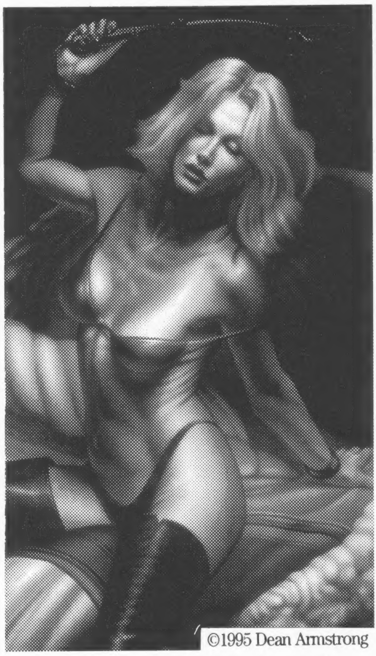
A brief chat with Schism Comics creator/writer/penciller **Mike Pascale**.

Q: Just what is *Bru-Hed's Breathtaking Beauties*?

MP: Alliteratively speaking, it's a "pulchritudinous pin-up book showcasing sexy sirens, voluptuous vixens and myriad mammiferous maidens."

Q: Who's in it?

MP: The full-color front and back covers were beautifully painted by regular *Bru-Hed* cover artist and award-winner **Dean Armstrong**. (He's done covers for Kitchen Sink as well as posters for various movies and videos). These covers are some of the best painted work you'll see in comics today. Interior art is by myself and inker **Dave Sonnett**; **Dean** also contributied some wonderful b/w pin-ups for the book.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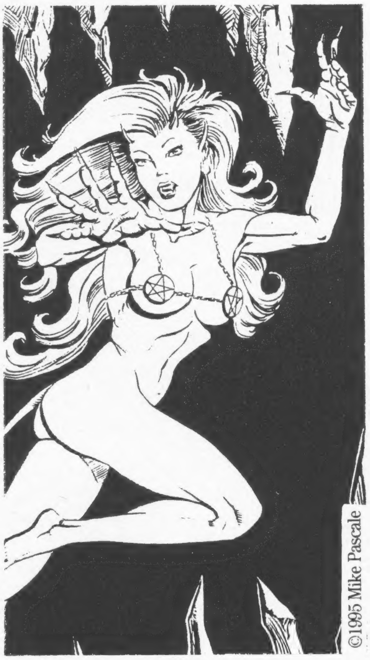
©1995 Mike Pascale

Q: Could you describe the subject matter a little more?

MP: Sure. I'd rate it "PG-13". There are female vampires, sultry sexpots, warrior women, nature nymphs . . .

Q: You seem to have quite an affinity for alliteration. (Oops! now I'm doing it.)

MP: Catchy, isn't it? Anyway, the comic also features a special four-page preview of our forthcoming "bad girl" entry, *Nasti: Monster Huntress*™.

Q: Let's cut to the chase: How do people get a copy?

MP: It's only available in comic shops; but if your retailer is sold out, you can still order from Schism Comics.

Q: What about the signed and numbered limited edition?

MP: Only **125 copies** have been autographed and numbered by **Dean Armstrong** and myself with certificates of authenticity. As a treat for *CI* readers (I've been one myself since issue four!), we're offering them this special book for ten bucks each or two for $15.

Q: There's a limit of two copies per person?

MP: Yes. Since there are only 125 available, I want to make sure that the fans who want them can **get** them, **and** for a reasonable price.

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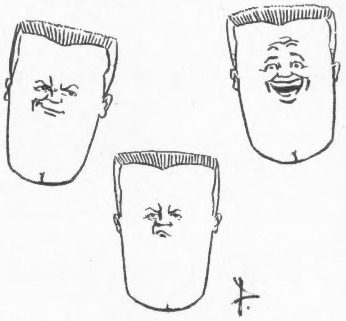
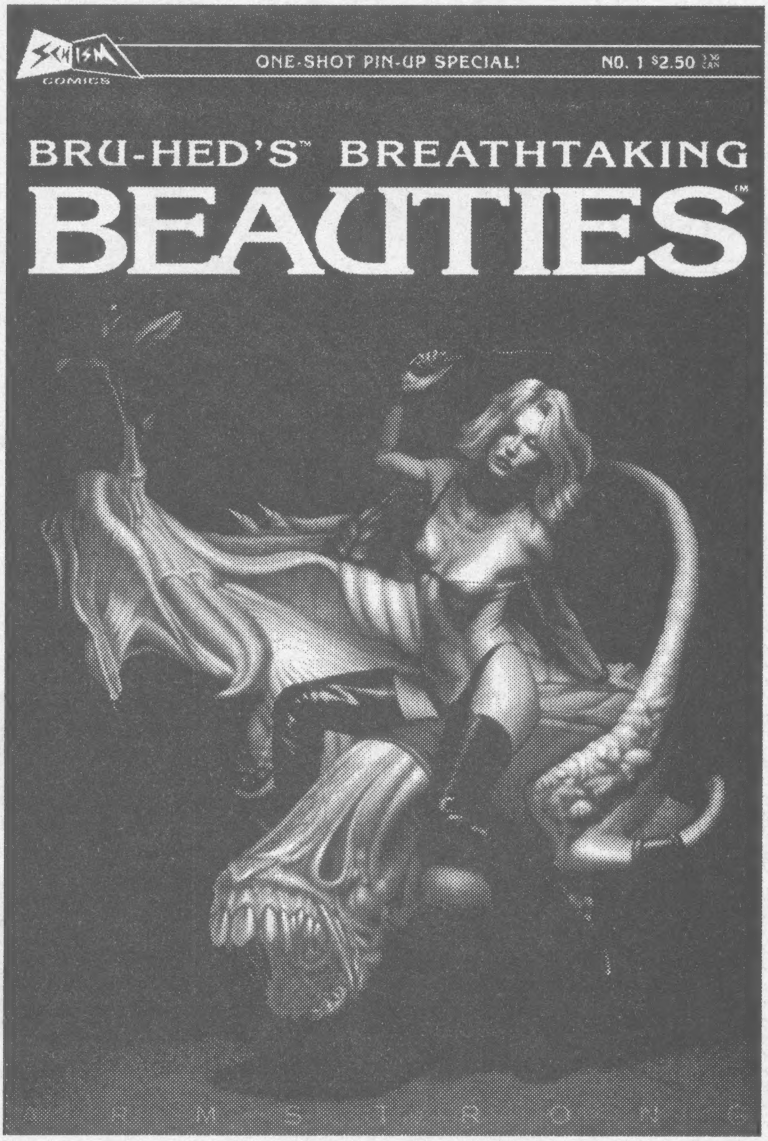


Q: What else can we expect from you and Schism?

MP: Well, *Bru-Hed* #1 just went into a second printing, and #4 (final issue of the mini series) should be shipping in January (all other issues are available, by the way). If fans of *Breathtaking Beauties* like comedy with their cheesecake, they should definitely check out ol' Bru boy himself! ■

LIMITED EDITION



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AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FOR *COMICS INTERVIEW* READERS!

Through this special offer, you can order one (or two) of only **125 copies** of this beautiful black-and-white, 32-page collection of passionate pin-ups signed & numbered by red-hot cover painter **Dean Armstrong** and famed *Bru-Hed* creator/artist **Mike Pascale**, with a Certificate of Authenticity, for just **$10** each or **two for $15 (postage included)**! Just fill out the form below (or a copy) and send with your check or money order today! But hurry--the supply, like this offer, is **strictly limited**!

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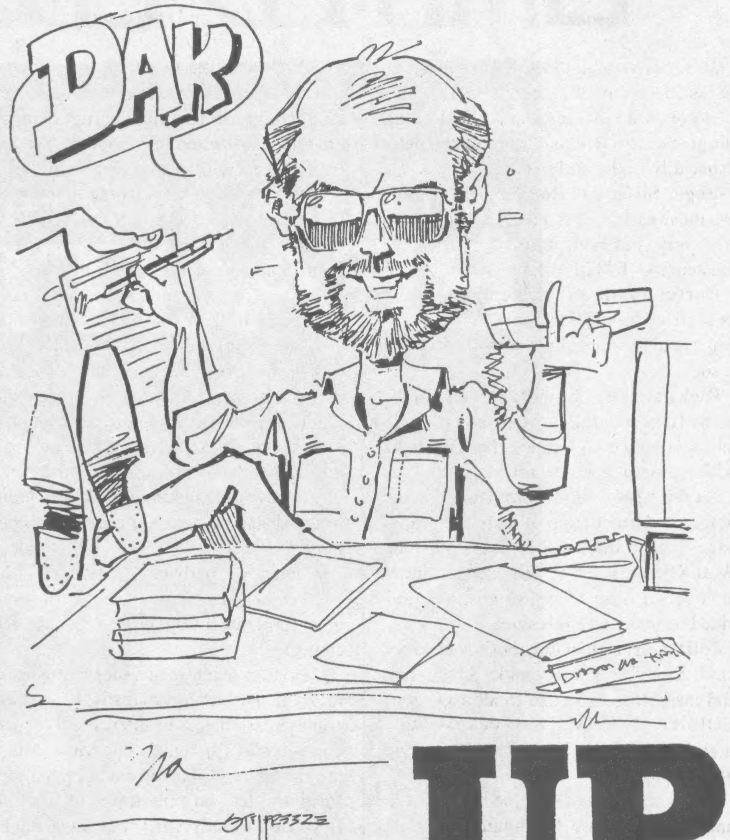
cover art by:
ADAM HUGHES



Art: BRIAN STELFREEZE

UP FRONT

ALL THINGS MUST PASS: THE END OF AN ERA

Wow, have we lasted a long time!

Longer than many entire comics companies and distributors, to be sure.

Hey, we outlasted not only MARVEL AGE magazine but, the way it looks right now, maybe the actual Marvel Age of Comics, as well.

150 consecutive issues under the same editor/publisher from the get-go must set some kind of record for continuous publication of a comics-related (or, indeed, any) periodical. Remember, COMICS JOURNAL really began with issues numbered in the mid-30s as a remake of an adzine. THE COMICS READER had several different publishers and editors, as did its clone, AMAZING HEROES.

Certainly for me, personally, **David Anthony Kraft's** COMICS INTERVIEW has set a record for sustained achievement and, yes, awesome endurance (anyone called upon to meet regular deadlines knows the drill — but being responsible for up to 48 other far-flung correspondents as well, plus a chain of various printers, suppliers and production people that is only as strong as its weakest link, well, let's just say the stress and stakes keep stacking up).

So that's why stitching it all together into one seamless monthly magazine for more than twelve-and-a-half years — and making it all look effortless — is such a signal accomplishment that I have to celebrate it here. Not bad for somebody who **Tony Isabella** once said didn't have any staying power. And, hey, where better to burst with well-earned pride after all these issues than here in the pages of my own long-lived magazine!

But there are, of course, many stalwarts who have given greatly of time and talent to make COMICS INTERVIEW such a steady and sterling source of first-hand industry info over the years. Thanks are particularly due:

Jim Salicrup for the brilliant simplicity of his conception for the germinating idea that grew into this magazine. And for all his generous and unpaid support and help, especially in the early years.

Roger Slifer and **Ron Fontes** for making those early issues a reality, each in his own way, but both in areas vital to the existence of INTERVIEW.

Darrel Boatz, an associate editor truly beyond compare, for being reliable, always ready to contribute ideas and "make it so."

Rick Jagus and **Don Markstein** for the many (crucial!) times they came through on short notice and impossible deadlines with typesetting and so much more.

David (Hambone) Hamilton, for the design and production of well over 3,000 pages for this magazine with his Machine Wolf Graphics crew. His extraordinary archives of unseen comics art have provided us many an exclusive!

Julia Mather for contributions of every kind, from her considerable advertising and marketing expertise to all aspects of COMICS INTERVIEW — this magazine literally wouldn't have been the same without her.

There are many others, too numerous to name here, whose help and efforts on behalf of the magazine over the years I know, remember and will always appreciate. Thanks, each and every one of you.

So why am I winding up such a long and successful run with this issue?

Well, in the immortal words of **Arnold Schwarzenegger** toward the end of TERMINATOR 2, "I need a vacation" — and the way he *looks* at that point in the movie is the way I *feel* after being hammered non-stop by one deadline after another for over twelve years. But if that's all it took to stop me, I'd have called it quits long ago; there's a lot I like about producing INTERVIEW, a satisfaction that makes it all worthwhile.

No, it's more than that. The entire comics market has been in a continuing and deteriorating state of distress for quite some time and is, at the moment, extremely unstable. For the past couple years, as publishers and distributors large and small put the best possible "spin" on cancelling titles, reducing staff, and drastically downsizing — or went out of business altogether — I have lived with the ever-present possibility, the increasingly almost certain expectation of imminent extinction for INTERVIEW due to market forces beyond control. Oddly enough, we're still here and, who knows, maybe the magazine might even survive this storm as it has all the others.

But as the direct distribution system for comics and related material undergoes the savage, sudden and severe throes of market upheaval, it's more than likely that at some point in the near future — maybe next issue, maybe next year — the magazine would meet with an abrupt demise, anyway, cancelled at random like so many others without warning.

Rather than such an ignominious end, better by far for COMICS INTERVIEW to bring such a long and distinguished run to a close with style and control on a satisfyingly round number: #150 is perfect. So be it. If anyone had told me when I was working on the first issue of INTERVIEW in late 1982, with the '70s still ringing in my ears, that the magazine would stretch into the future for an unbroken string of 150 issues all the way through the mid-'90s, with the first notes of the new millennium already sounding in the distance, it would have blown my mind.

Who knows, perhaps COMICS INTERVIEW will evolve and survive, in some new form, well beyond the turn of the century.

Unlike so many magazines that consist in large part of journalistic or critical commentary that is of interest only while current (if at all), our all-interview format provides live visits with creators that stay fresh and let you time-travel to find out first-hand exactly what they were thinking, in their *own* words, about their work.

So much important primary source material on the comics field has appeared in these pages — interviews with industry greats, many no longer with us — that I would like to see COMICS INTERVIEW live on where all the material is most accessible, in cyberspace, perhaps as part of some vast comics web where the power of computers makes instant access, and ease of doing global searches using a key word, a virtual snap.

As for me, maybe it's time for the pendulum to swing back toward the creative side, to rest and recharge. To read for pleasure and find time to ride horses and go SCUBA diving again. To write. To go for long walks in the woods. And long country rides in the convertible with the top down.

Then, of course, there are plenty of ambitious projects already well in the works. While it's still way too early to announce any of them, I trust there will be some exciting news from unexpected quarters long before the turn of the aforementioned century.

In the meantime, enjoy this superlative special issue — we went all out to make COMICS INTERVIEW #150 a classic!

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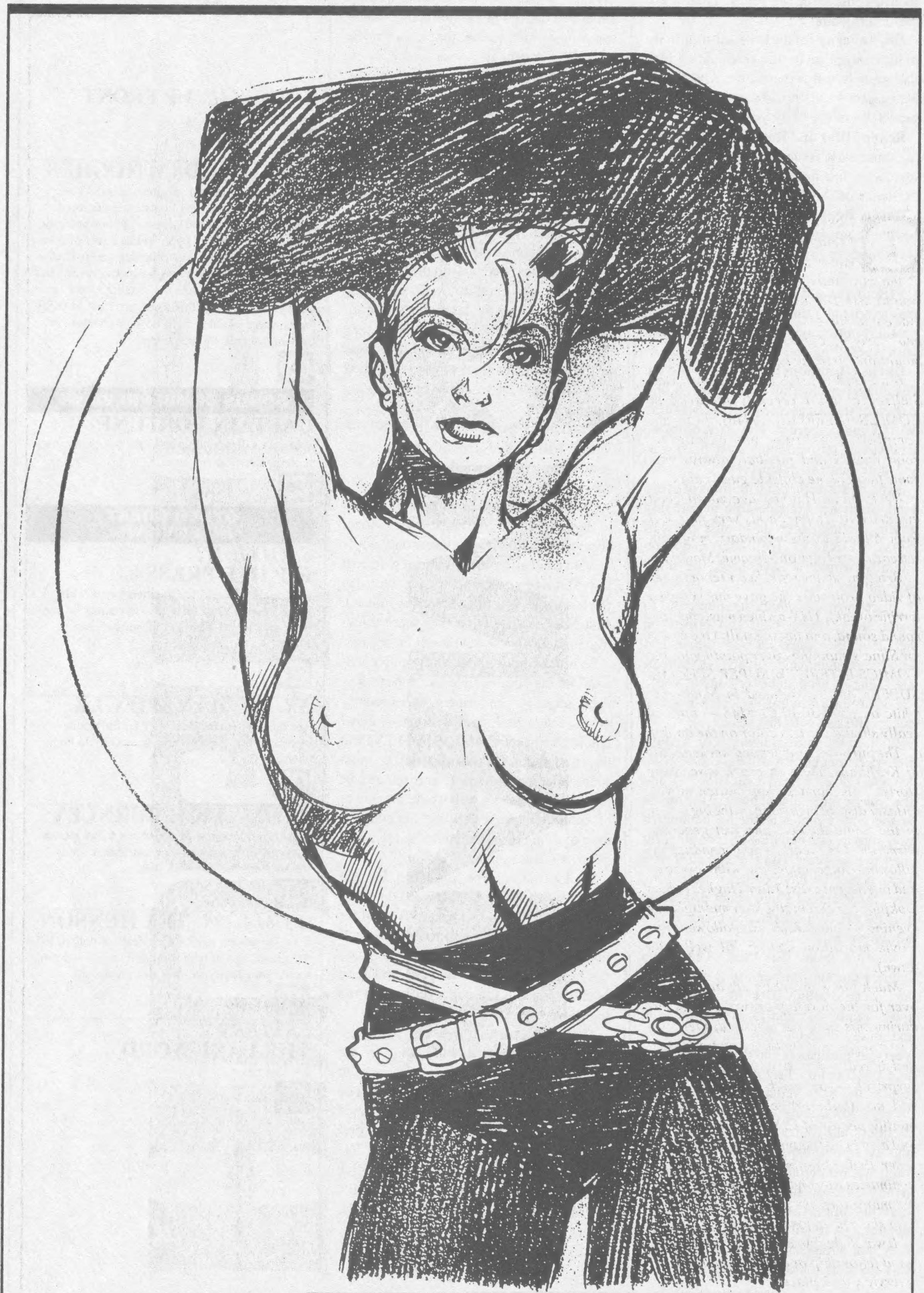
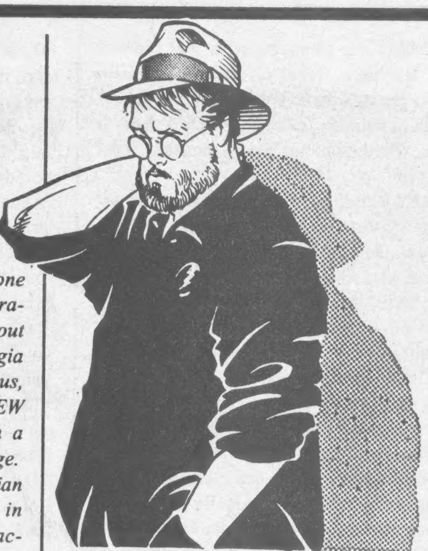
“The first time I drew a woman I remember



hunching over so God couldn't see me."

ADAM HUGHES



It began at Gaijin Studios one Friday afternoon with a caravan of cars wending its way out of the city and into the north Georgia mountains. The destination: Krafthaus, hidden home of COMICS INTERVIEW and oasis of comics and culture on a mountain top in the beautiful Blue Ridge.*

In the lead: artists Stine Walsh and Brian Stelfreeze (most recently featured in COMICS INTERVIEW #148), both accomplished painters par excellence, *good friends and familiar, always welcome faces at the cliffside guest cabin.*

Next: Adam Hughes, acclaimed good girl artist of Gaijin, on his very first visit from Atlanta to the legendary mountain retreat located high on Screamer Mountain.

Bringing up the rear: Sean Tebor, tuner of video projectors (he gave our system a terrific tweak), THX-trained master of surround sound, and (incidentally) the model for Stine's stunning cover painting for the COMICS INTERVIEW SUPER SPECIAL: SUPERMAN (reproduced in black-and-white on page 30 of CI #148 — but you really should see it in color on the book!).

The purpose: an extended weekend stay at Krafthaus, there to crack wise, swap stories, talk comics shop, watch movies on laser disc all night long on the big screen in the home theater, and just generally carry on. Oh, yeah — and conduct the following huge interview with awesome and intelligent artist Adam Hughes (which took place, incidentally, after midnight one evening — and which was followed by a movie marathon lasting 'til well after dawn).

Much fun was had by all, and carried over for the next day or two. Somewhere during this long lost weekend, there was also a surprise birthday party for DAK — and it really was a surprise, a very big surprise! — at which Adam took what will no doubt prove to be blackmail-quality photos of CI's stunned publisher, and also in attendance at which were none other than long-time comics and movie luminaries Roy and Dann Thomas, among the many surprise guests and old friends who showed up for the soiree.

It was in this atmosphere of camaraderie, good fellowship and high humor that this interview took place . . .

All characters in artwork accompanying this interview are TM & © their respective owners.

“I’m tired of ass fucking. I actually

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT: *I don’t know how much of this you actually want to talk about but: GHOST, what the heck happened?*

ADAM HUGHES: We’re going to start off with the —

STINE WALSH: This isn’t the PLAYBOY interview, man. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: Well uh hm . . . Should I just be hard as nails here or —

DAK: *Whatever you’re comfortable with.*

ADAM: — should I basically glorify the whole experience and make me look like less of a schmuck? *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Just for the record, it was all Dark Horse’s fault; let’s get that out right now.*

ADAM: No, it was 99% my fault, 1% their fault, that’s what I would say.

DAK: *Okay, let’s concentrate on that 1%.* (Laughter.) *But, as you were saying, most people identified you with that, thought of it as Adam Hughes’ character Ghost.*

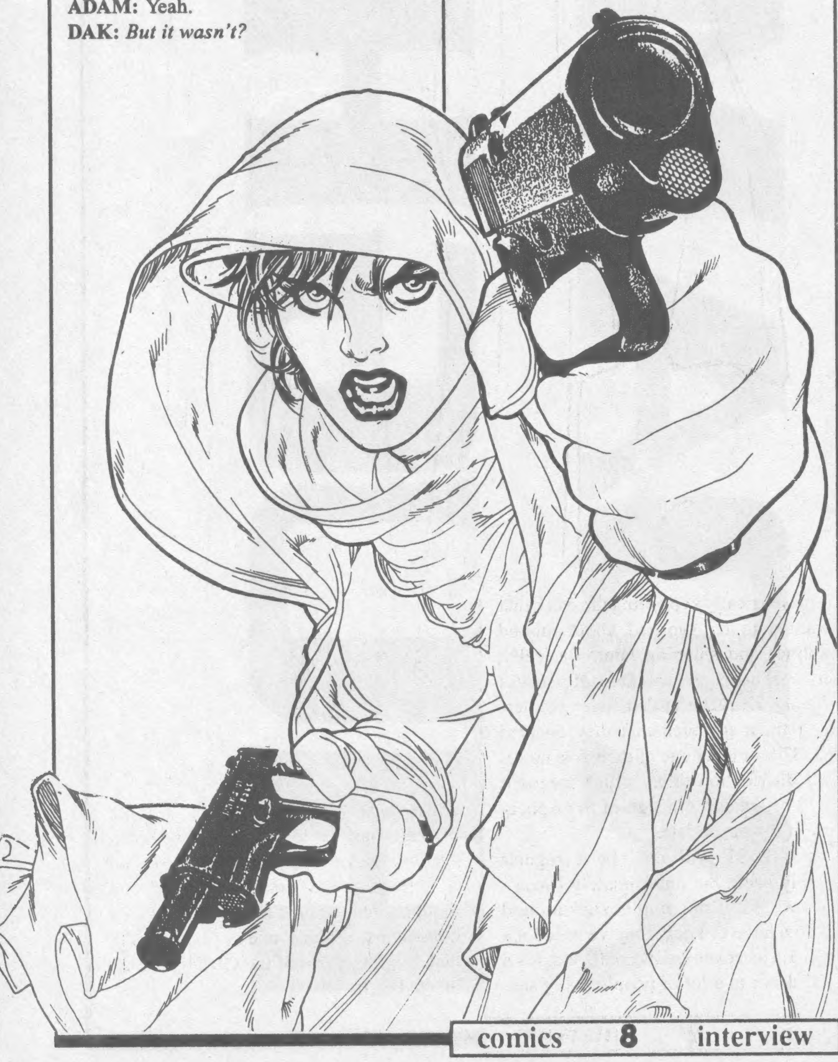
ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *But it wasn’t?*

ADAM: No. That character was created by **Barbara Kesel** on paper, and then visually by **Chris Warner,** the *manliest* man in comics. *(Laughter.)* Do I need to say, “Parenthetical: Heavy sarcasm, sobs of grief.”

DAK: *Actually, the transcriber does all that stuff at his own discretion and he can make you sound, like, serious even when you’re not.* (Sacre bleu, I am discovered!) *And we pull out for the top of the page the worst, damning quotes. Whatever you say will be distorted.*

ADAM: So, it’ll be at the top of the page if I said I’m tired of ass fucking. *(Laughter.)* I actually got caught saying that in a restaurant once. One of our studio guys had bought a book on Japanese slang, and this *slang* book, it’s basically everything you could possibly not really ever want to say in Japanese. So, I’m sitting there in this diner thumbing through this book at 1:00 in the morning and saying out loud all of these horrible gangster things; like, I’m saying it out loud but I’m not paying attention to the fact that I’m saying it out loud, I’m just thinking, “My *God,* why would anyone need to say this in *any* language?” And there’s one chapter on, sort of . . . like, alternative life styles. *(Laughter.)* So, there’s one point in a young Japanese homosexual’s life where he needs to say, “I’m tired of ass fucking.” *(Laughter.)* It’s there in Japanese and I say this out loud in shock and dismay. Murphy’s Law: Then the waiter arrived with our food. *(Laughter.)* So, they asked me not to return to the Landmark.



DAK: *Well —*

ADAM: But anyway, back to Dark Horse.

DAK: *Are you trying to say something else with that story, about the Dark Horse relationship?*

ADAM: No. Disclaimer: I am simple, I am one dimensional, there is no subtext, there is no other level. When I say something it’s not like: Oh, he’s talking about the price of eggs. *(Laughter.)* You know, it’s just plain —

BRIAN STELFREEZE: Do not look for substance in his soliloquy.

ADAM: No. Life is a box of chocolates, that’s all I’m saying. Now, what happened with Dark Horse, we started off way way way way way in advance and I eventually even messed *that* up. Basically, my experiences on PENTHOUSE COMIX taught me that, you know — because on the PENTHOUSE COMIX stuff I always put it off until the last minute, draw it all in the eleventh hour and get it done. “*Eventually*” is my middle name. I’d finish it all but always while the clock was ticking and the trucks to go to the printers were running, *waiting* for me to finish the pages. I said, “Hey, I bet I could do a monthly series, that would be a good shot in the arm for my career, and Ghost is the character to do it.”

All of us guys at Gaijin Studio are, you know, dipping our toes in the creator-owned waters; everybody said I should just go ahead and do that, but I said I needed to reestablish myself in the marketplace. I always joke at the studio that I’m the only guy at the studio who is basically in the job of performing career *maintenance.* Everybody else is *building* their careers. Even Brian here is still every day making a name for himself, while I’m basically: Hey, remember that **Adam Hughes** guy; he did JUSTICE LEAGUE back in the ’80s. I have to think: Hey, what have I done lately?

got caught saying that in a restaurant."

Sometimes I get that feeling that I have to do something new to reestablish myself in the market, and I thought GHOST would be the thing to do it; build my new name and reputation on somebody else's character and then *reap* all of the benefits with my own, that's the way to do it nowadays.

JULIA R. MATHER: *A la Todd McFarlane.*

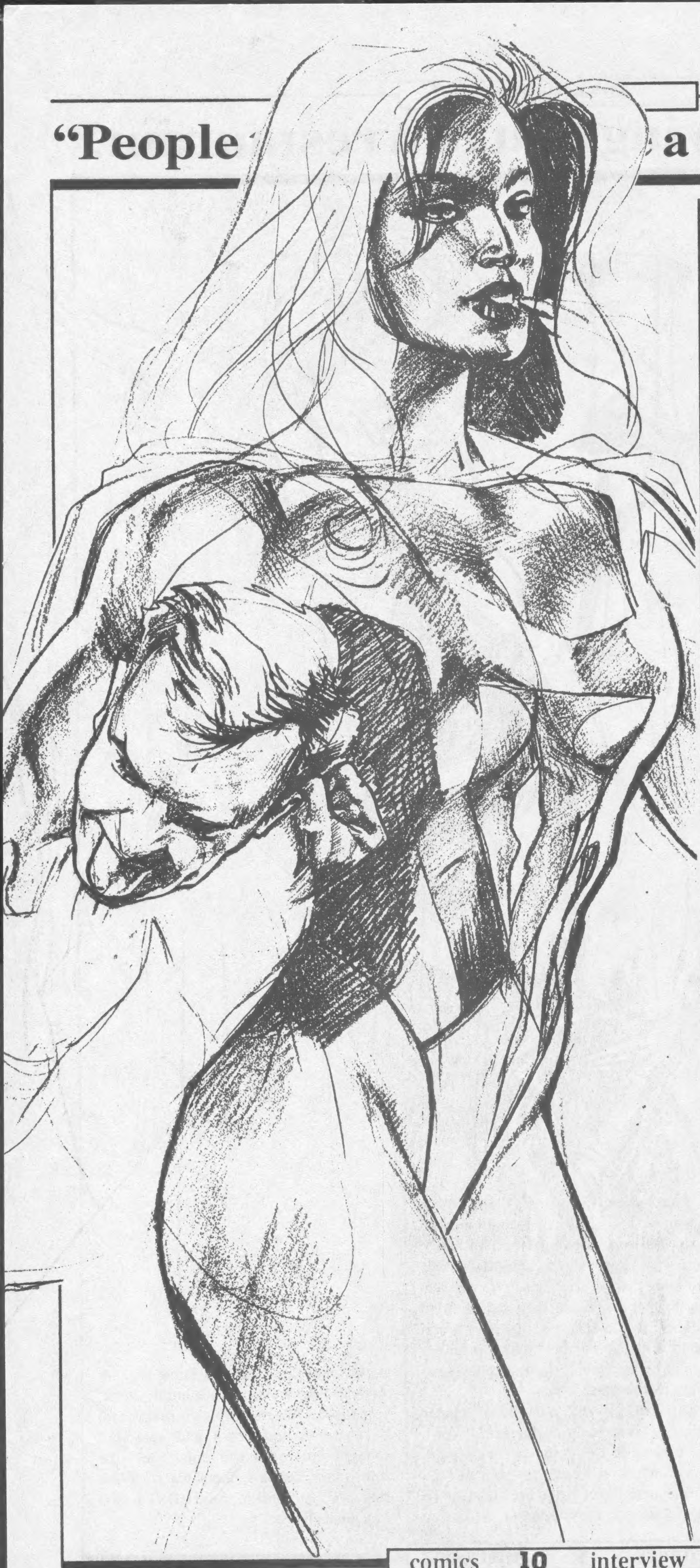
ADAM: Actually, that's a good example. **Kurt Busiek** laid down the law for me, we talked about two characters from *Hell!* We talked about Hellboy and Spawn. Basically, he said look what **Mike Mignola** did. **Mike Mignola,** you know, works year in — year out, day in — day out. He can do a comic book a month if he wanted to. But he does a mini-series here, a mini-series there, he jumps from company to company to company. And people who like his work have to sort of follow him wherever he goes. But **Todd McFarlane,** basically, every career move he made was *up* not sideways. He goes from INFINITY INC. to THE HULK. What's up from THE HULK? SPIDER-MAN! What's up from SPIDER-MAN? His *own* SPIDER-MAN! Next thing, he's doing his own comic books, taking his bazillion fans with him. So, basically, all the painstaking years of building your own reputation are done with somebody else's characters, then the day comes finally when you throw your own party with what you own.

I thought if I'm going to do creator-owned stuff God knows if it'll be successful or not, so let's see if I can get back in the marketplace with GHOST. And we started years and years and years in advance; healthy, generous deadlines. And, as usual, I was committed to way too many projects, I was behind on *all* of them. I made the big mistake — you see, I thought I could distance myself from the material and do a page a day no matter what, but basically I want every page to be the best one that I've got because I feel that I'm *cheating* if it's a piece of crap, if *I* think it's a piece of crap. I made the mistake of falling in love with the material. I *really* fell in love with GHOST, there were just a million and one things I wanted to do with it, and they all of course require *time.*

By the time I finished the second issue of GHOST the first issue had just come out. And the 1% that I will point at Dark Horse is Dark Horse was just telling me, "Oh, we love the work you're doing; please draw faster but don't skimp on the quality." I'm in a strange kind of rock/hard place, like I didn't know what to do, so I just basically kept doing the work that *I* wanted to do, worried about missed deadlines and shipping later. Basically, then what happened was Dark Horse was *enjoying* the material that I was delivering to them so much that they decided GHOST would be one of their five newsstand distribution titles, which means it would be the seventh sign of the Apocalypse if it shipped late.

So, GHOST will now be a regular monthly book, but unfortunately I won't be drawing it. I'm going to stick around and do whatever I can, they've asked me to remain as cover artist. I realize that's a big letdown to a lot of people, a big step down, but I'm going to stick around; basically not try to do a monthly book, just do what I do best, which is *lavish* a lot of attention and detail and care and thought into what I'm doing, for like mini-series, specials, one-shots, stuff like that. So, that's sort of the GHOST fiasco in a nutshell.

“People [illegible] e a strip club and



BRIAN: Well, something that's really sort of odd — and we've stayed up nights talking about this on occasion — but you've got a lot of fans; they're really excited about your stuff; they really enjoy what you do; but I think what they're enjoying isn't the marketing scheme, not all the cool stuff, and not the characters that you work on or anything like that. I think the people really enjoy your work. Your work is not something where you can wake up in the morning and turn on the tap and it flows. Your work, it sort of flows when it happens. You've got to ride it when the wave is up, but otherwise you've got to sort of sit on the shore. I decided I couldn't do a monthly book after I did CYCOPS. I couldn't put in the quality that I wanted to put into something by just turning on the tap. And GHOST, I think one of the main reasons why the book sold so well was because the name **Adam Hughes** was attached to the project. Your name attached to a project is also your name attached to a standard of quality that you refuse to dive below.

ADAM: Yeah. I mean, it's true, it's . . . it's one of those things where I could stand on the point of, you know, artistic integrity, desire for perfectionism, trying to raise comic books above just a mere commercial periodical industry — which *is* what it *is.* Trying to do something that will one day lead to a cancer cure — *(Laughter.)* I'm sure for everything that I could say about that, there are disgruntled editors with gray hairs I caused them.

God, I remember when I had nine pages to go on the STAR TREK graphic novel that I did for DC Comics, so I went to a preview of STAR TREK VI. **Bob Greenberger** at DC took me — DC basically invited all of the cattle in the STAR TREK corral. So, afterwards we all went out to dinner, I got to meet Bob's wife, and basically at this point the graphic novel had been running on for ten months, it was supposed to be done in six. Bob introduced me to his wife and she looked at me and said, “Oh, you're the one.” *(Laughter.)* Okay, I'm sure editors stand around water coolers using me as sort of a thing to get the blood pressure up; I'm sure the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

The simple truth is as much as I would like to do a monthly book and be there for those people who like my work, I am pretty miserable sending out work that I am not happy with.

DAK: *So, you were saying you kind of liked Todd's strategy where every career move is an upward move, but if you can't*

my mail comes i b ”

transplant that strategy — have you then rethought a strategy?

ADAM: No, not really. I'm one of those people who knows what's good for me but I don't do it. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Hey, we're all like that.*

ADAM: There are some people, you know, who end up on top of the compost heap; I think they're people who figured out the best way to get there, rise above it all. I'm rethinking my strategy. It's like I worry that the career warning light is flashing brightly; I'm running out of time. I'd like to think that there's a long long long career for me in comics, but people come and people go, you know. I've always had a lot of concern — was JUSTICE LEAGUE the zenith of my career, was that the apex? Is basically everything after that a long, slow slide downhill? Am I slowly dragging along the few people who remember who I am and what I do?

JULIA: *Oh, gosh, I can tell you the minute I say to anybody COMICS INTERVIEW #150 is going to be, like, THE GIRLS OF ADAM HUGHES, everyone's excited.*

DAK: *But this could be a curse as well as a blessing, right?*

ADAM: Well, yeah. I think —

JULIA: *But don't you love drawing women and isn't that why it comes out the way it does?*

ADAM: I enjoy it. Most people that I talk to about this think that I must live above a strip club and all my mail comes in brown wrappers. *(Laughter.)* It's like, you know, I get these guys that come up to me at conventions, they're like moist, humid human beings, "I sure love the way you draw those women." I'm thinking: I should start drawing men so *women* will come up to me at conventions. That's a strategy, yeah! *(Laughter.)*

BRIAN: But that has happened.

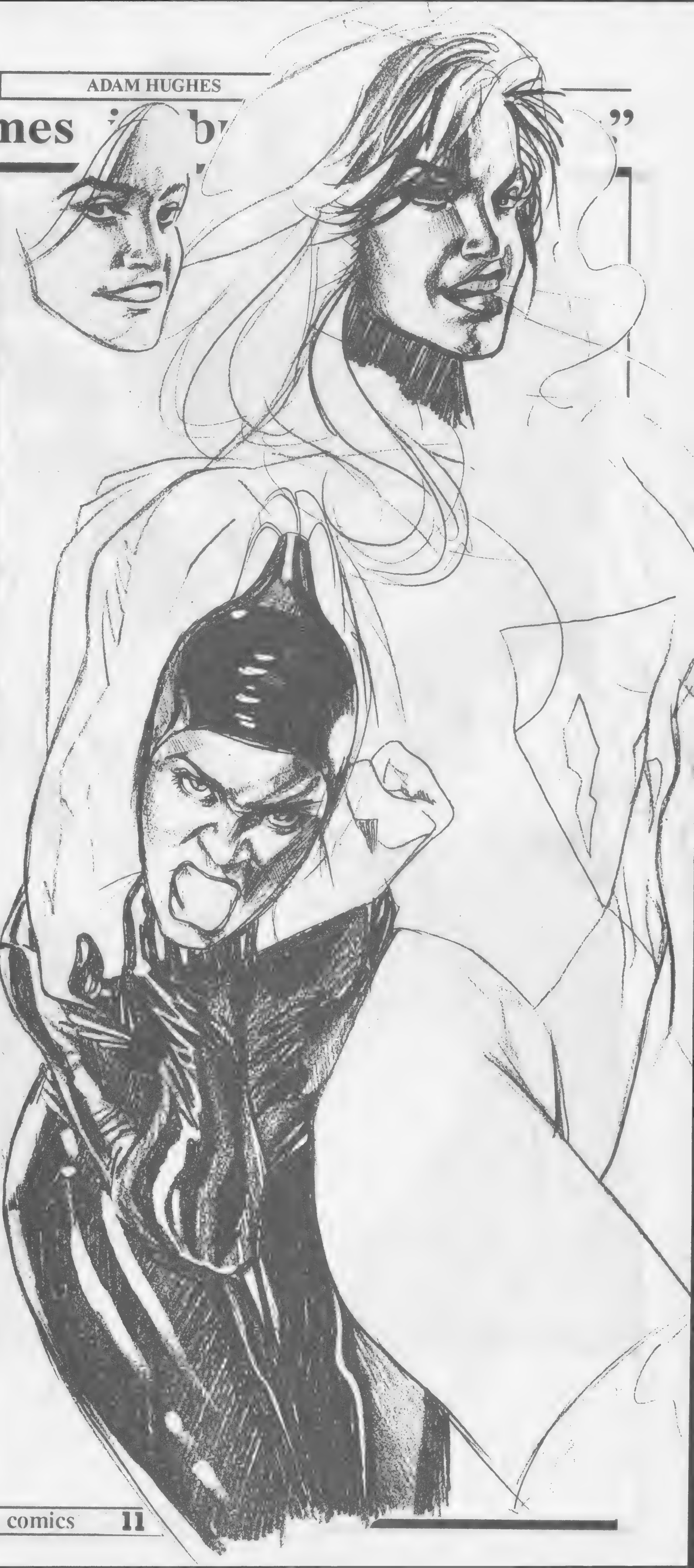
ADAM: Well, yeah, the butch dykes —

BRIAN: "I like the way you draw women, too!" *(Laughter.)*

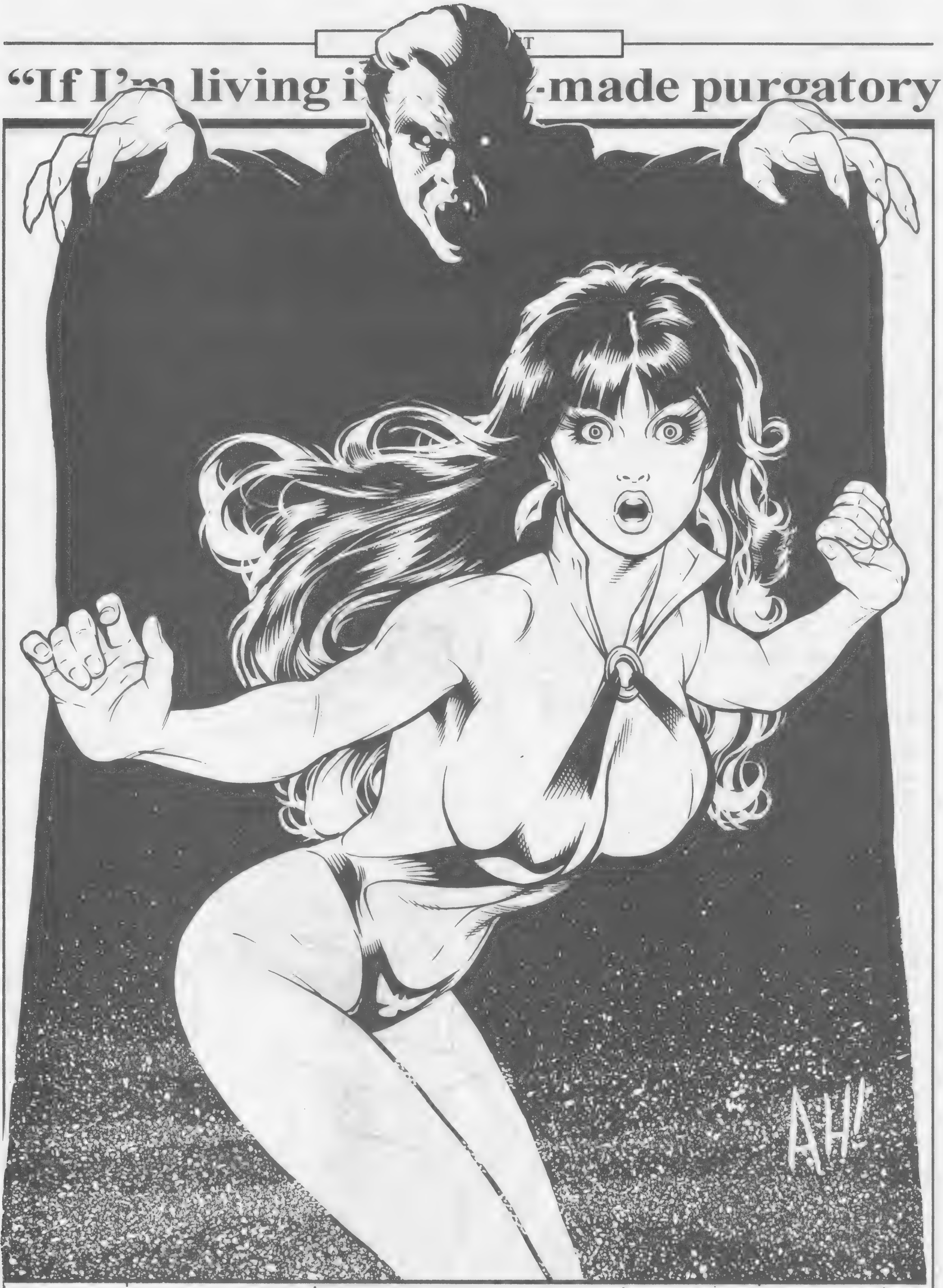
ADAM: It gets pretty scary. It's like, you know, when you talk about somebody who is mega mega popular like Todd or Jim — the transcriber can put their names in parenthesis —

DAK: I think the readers can figure it out.

ADAM: Yeah. It's kind of cool to drop first names like that, you look pretentious. But, you know, they just get a bazillion people. My fans that I get at conventions, I just boil the fat away and I get the interesting characters. Everybody that comes up to talk to me, there's a FAR SIDE cartoon to be made about, like, everybody I meet.



“If I’m living i -made purgatory



But, you talk about the whole curse/blessing thing, my approach to it is if there’s stereotyping or typecasting to be done, there’s two kinds: There’s the **George Reeves** kind where you can’t get work and you end up basically putting an end to it all, or there’s the kind that keeps you in work. If I am living in a self-made purgatory of drawing women in comics then it’s my own fault and I will reap the benefits and pay the price for it at the same time.

DAK: *Maybe therein is your strategy. If that’s what has made such an impression over the years, maybe that’s what works for you. If you’re going to get stereotyped then just do the best goddamn girls —*

# of drawing women it's my own fault?"

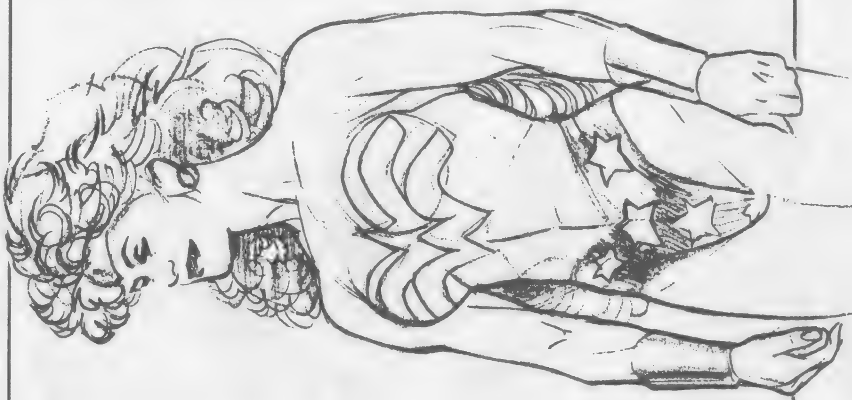
BRIAN: There's something else that's really cool that I'm really big on. When I was really into comics, you know, I had friends who were really big fans of what **Neal Adams** was doing, they were big fans of what **Jack Kirby** was doing; but I was like the only guy on the block who really got into **Gil Kane.** I kept just thinking that **Gil Kane** was this gem that only I knew about, you know, and I felt that he could draw these other guys under the table. But those other guys were like mega mega mega popular and that was a really cool thing. And I think to a very large extent the **Adam Hughes** fans, you know, are not fans of the characters, they are fans of **Adam Hughes.**

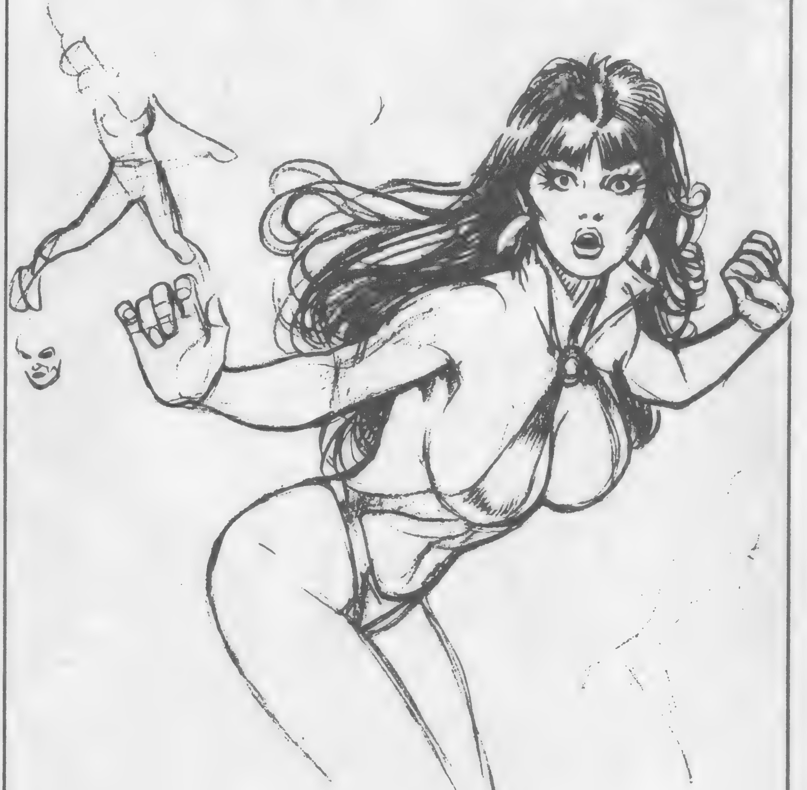
Like, a lot of guys do X-MEN and get mega popular from X-MEN, or get mega popular from doing SPIDER-MAN or whatever, those guys have fans who could care less who they are. "Oh, you're the guy who draws WOLVERINE — could you sign my book?" I think to a large extent, like what you said about **Mike Mignola,** a **Mike Mignola** fan is a true fan of **Mike Mignola,** that's it. Whatever your career is, whether you're stumbling uphill or stumbling downhill, there's a couple of people who have sort of stumbled along with you, and they will track down stuff. "Here's a VAMPIRELLA with a cover by Adam. I won't even *read* the inside of this book; I couldn't care *less* about the inside of this book, but I'll buy this for the **Adam Hughes** cover." I think *that* says a lot about what you are capable of doing with your artwork.

ADAM: Yeah, there is that . . . I *hate* to be the guy playing the negativistic devil's advocate all the time, but I'm like a dog worrying a bone when it comes to: Oh, gee, am I messing up my career? This is my only shot? I'm qualified for *nothing* else. *(Laughter.)* You know, I would get laughed out of a McDonald's; being a comic-book artist is my one shot, so every time I make a mistake I wonder if that's the last straw. It's tough. In addition to the talk that **Kurt Busiek** had with me, the thing that'll like endear you to more fans — you have your die-hard fans who are willing to thumb through ADVANCE COMICS to find your name, and then you've got your *casual* fans who basically like you enough to buy you every time they find you on the stands; and let's face it, the large majority of comic-book fans out there are those casual fans. They're the people that walk into a comics shop and go, "Oh, look, an **Adam Hughes** cover; I didn't know he was doing that; I'll purchase that."

JULIA: *But don't you think the fact that you did the first couple of issues of GHOST, kicked it off, has made it much more popular than it ever would be for Dark Horse, from here on out? You gave it a sort of creative look that's going to carry on, whoever comes onto that book after you is going to emulate that because it did so well.*

ADAM: I don't know. There have been people who have said similar things to what you're saying, that people bought that book because **Adam Hughes** was associated with it, and I would like to think they bought it because of the ideas that I came up with for it. I would like to think that they didn't buy it because of my name, that they bought it because I looked at Ghost and decided there is a correct way to do this character. It hadn't been done incorrectly because nobody did it before me, but, you know . . . basically, the guys at Dark Horse have *broken through* into a mine shaft on this character. I'm the guy to go in there and dig out all this gold. That's my biggest regret, is that there was so much to GHOST and I wanted to be the one guy who basically





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"You were 90% of what made GHOST cool."

made it the coolest Dark Horse comic there could ever be.

BRIAN: Yeah but, you know —

JULIA: *There's still going to be a bit of that with the covers.*

BRIAN: — you were still 90% of what made GHOST cool.

ADAM: Well, it would be cool to think that. My biggest *gripe* with comics is I don't want to be the second or third guy in the assembly line. I don't think that every idea that I have is, you know, *gold,* but I would like to know that my voice is at least being heard. And GHOST was one of those first times, I really felt like I could stand up and say, "How about this idea?" People could say that's pretty cool or that's not what they're looking for, but they're listening. I was really happy because they *liked* where I wanted to go with GHOST.

JULIA: *Isn't there a possibility of you maybe doing a mini-series?*

ADAM: Sure. That's what we're talking about, that's what we're going to do. I'm going to do whatever I can because it's something, you know . . . you *want* to be associated with a good character.

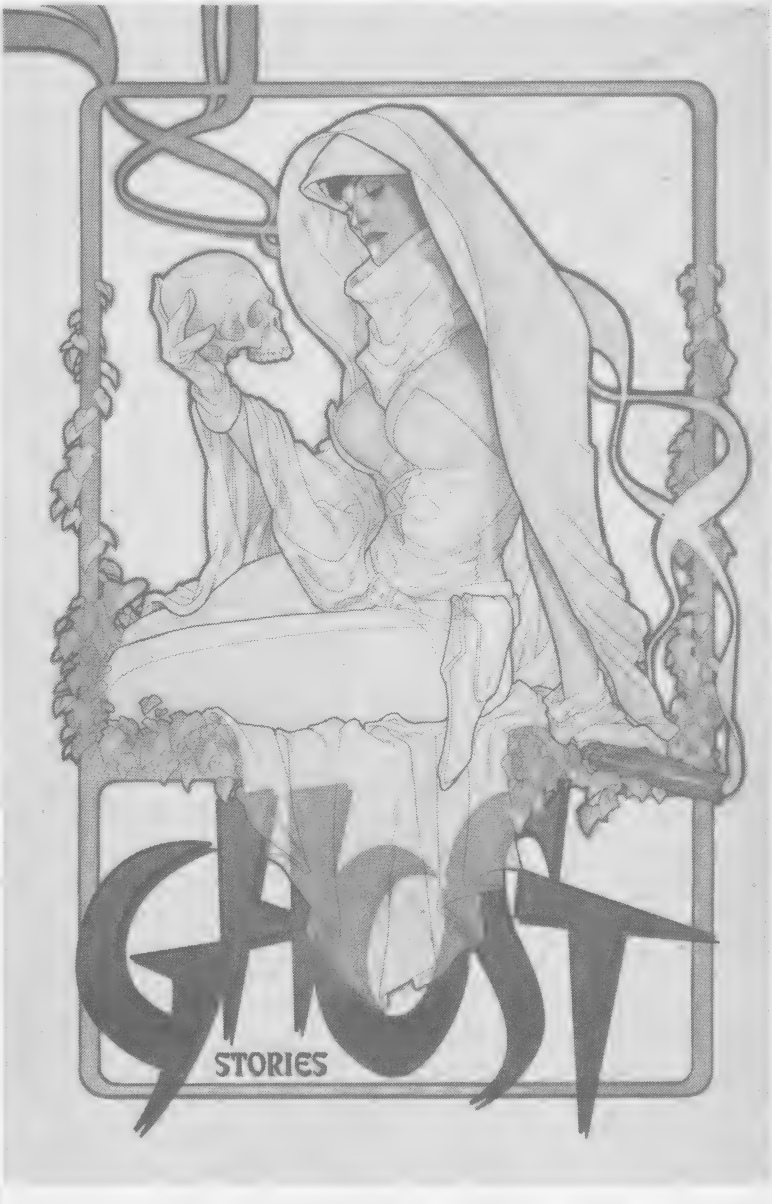
JULIA: *I would think that that wouldn't be happening, and you would not still be doing the covers on GHOST, if Dark Horse didn't really feel that having you associated with the character was financially beneficial. They wouldn't go ahead and have you do a mini-series if they felt that you didn't have a lot to contribute.*

ADAM: That is true. But, you see, my disappointment comes from the fact that *I* had concrete story plans for Ghost; Ghost goes from A to B to C, there's character growth, there's character evolution, and this isn't a character that at the end of every issue returns to some sort of an ineffable *status quo,* remaining the same forever.

JULIA: *Were you writing it as well?*

ADAM: No, no. **Eric Luke** was writing the book, but this was Eric's first comic book. Eric is a screenwriter by trade, and anybody who knows comic-book story construction knows that although screenwriting and comic-book writing are bastard cousins; they are not the same thing. There is a healthy, diverse difference between the two, even though they're similar and it's possible for you to do one and then do the other. They're both storytelling forms that involve visual communication, but they are different, they have their own feel. Some things work in film that don't work in comics, and *vice versa.*

Eric came in with a lot of great ideas, but he was willing to say — and I really appreciated this — he was willing to say, "What can you do that will make this even better?" He had no ego about the whole affair. And the greatest compliment he ever gave me was he called me up after he saw the pencils to GHOST #1 and said, "The things you did with some of these characters have sparked so many ideas in me that I am going to write them in more. I'm going to create a bigger cast of characters."



DAK: *Were you working from full script or a plot?*

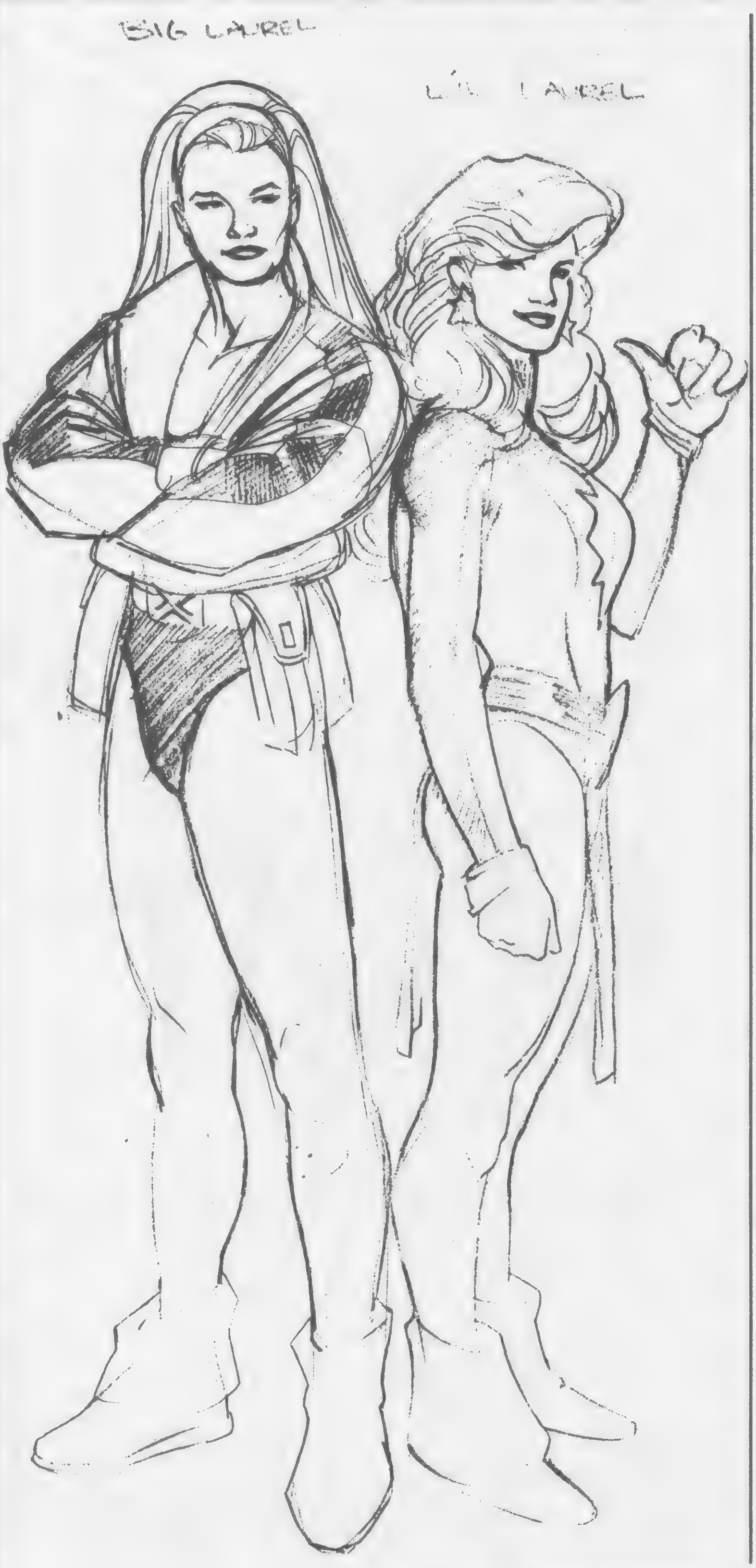
ADAM: Full script.

DAK: *What I thought was the greatest thing about working in the so-called Marvel style was that sometimes you could do a plot and if the artist was firing on all eight cylinders, or if he was a Jaguar and he was firing on all twelve, you'd get it back and you'd see whole new dimensions; it would spark you to go off. I think some of the best stuff that came from Stan Lee and Jack Kirby was like that. But you took a full script and did that and it still had that effect on him?*

ADAM: Yeah. It's . . . it's dicey.

JULIA: *You've always said that the Marvel style makes creative people stretch more than they would —*

“I’m a bane and I blow deadlines . . . but



DAK: *There are many opinions on that.* (Laughter.)

JULIA: *But* you, *you having worked in it always felt that.*

DAK: *I always liked it, even when it was a bitch.*

BRIAN: I think the Marvel style in its best case scenario is the best style to work in, but given the fact that — and Adam and I have to deal with this all the time — given the fact that comics are done on an assembly line process, it’s real easy for one person in the chain to get lazy. When *that* happens the Marvel style is the *worst* style to work in.

ADAM: That’s one of the things that disheartens me about cranking out monthly work. If everybody on a book is working together towards a common, unified goal, if there’s an idea on the book and everybody is pursuing it, that’s cool. But, you know, if the writer is a deconstructionist and the artist is a cubist and the inker decides he wants to do *art nouveau,* then basically you’re going to come up with a creative endeavor that works under the committee system, which is not something that anybody likes but everybody doesn’t *hate.* Basically, it’s just a big candidate for mediocrity.

DAK: *Yeah, probably that’s the rule.*

ADAM: I don’t like that. Like, I’m a bane to comic book publishers everywhere and I blow deadlines, and I’m not *thrilled* with that. I don’t like having a bad reputation; but if I have the choice between somebody says **Adam Hughes** is a pretty mediocre artist but he ships on time, or basically somebody says **Adam Hughes** may be all kinds of headaches but he does good work, I’d rather be doing the work and putting those nice looking comic books out there.

DAK: *You’ve opened up so many basic, fundamental truths behind comics just in that one thought. But if you don’t ship on time, especially in this day and age of distributors making up rules and so on, and readers expecting things to meet schedules — it’s become real regimented in that regard — that’s difficult. But the other side of it, and I’ve seen it again and again and again in comics, is folks who really pull out all of the stops to save the deadline, and in doing so produce work that is less than what’s associated with their name, what happens is nobody reading that knows that they saved somebody’s ass on the line, they just look at it and go, “Man, what happened to him, this is the worst piece of crap I’ve ever seen him do!” For the rest of your life that thing dogs you.*

ADAM: Yeah.

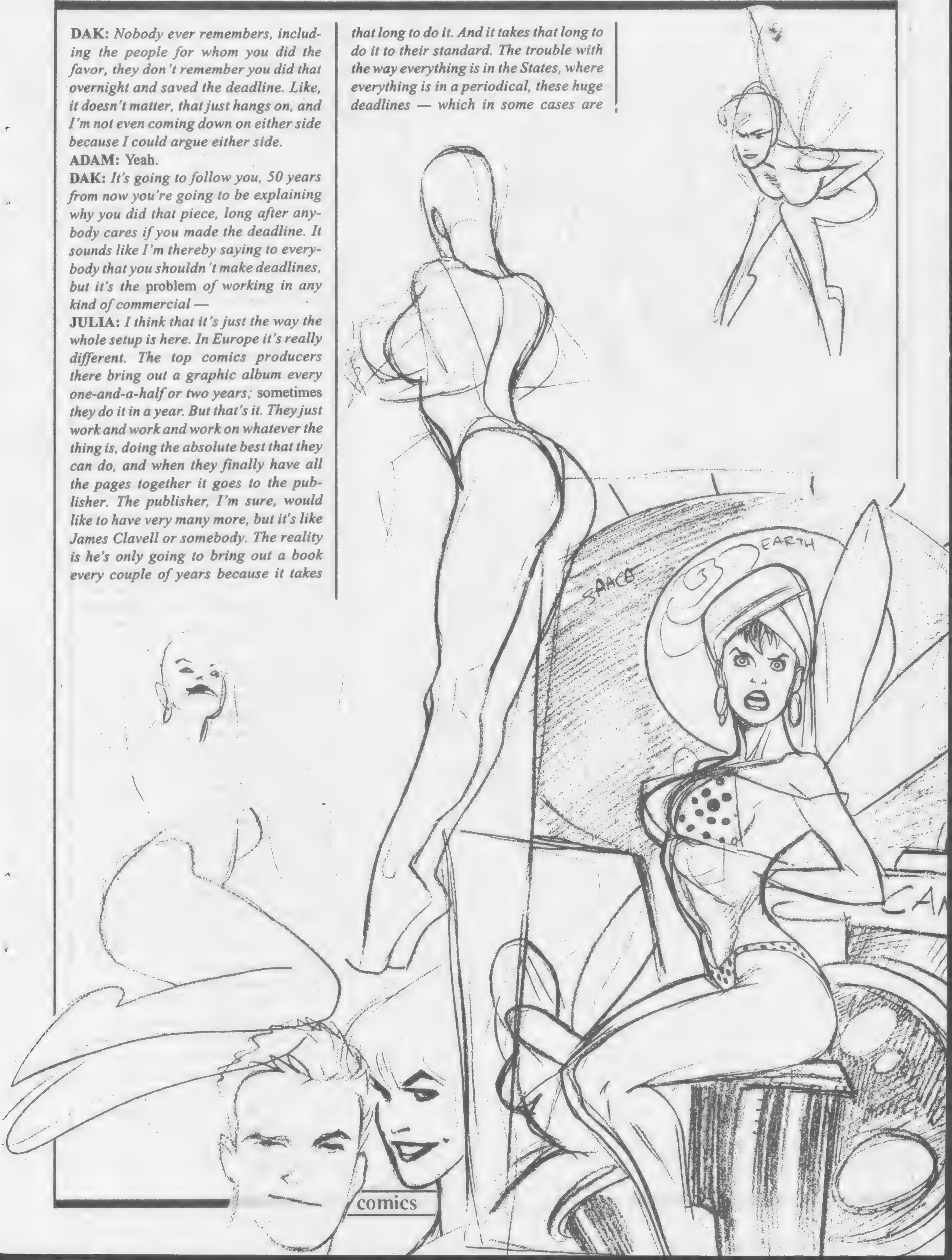
I'm putting nice-looking comics out."

DAK: *Nobody ever remembers, including the people for whom you did the favor, they don't remember you did that overnight and saved the deadline. Like, it doesn't matter, that just hangs on, and I'm not even coming down on either side because I could argue either side.*

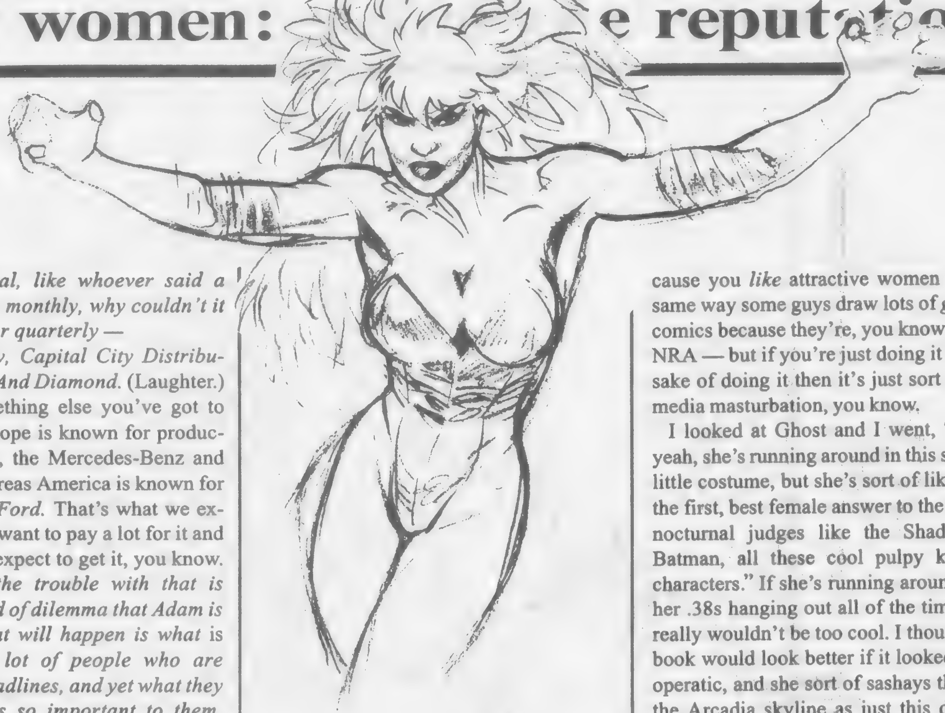
ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *It's going to follow you, 50 years from now you're going to be explaining why you did that piece, long after anybody cares if you made the deadline. It sounds like I'm thereby saying to everybody that you shouldn't make deadlines,* but it's the problem *of working in any kind of commercial —*

JULIA: *I think that it's just the way the whole setup is here. In Europe it's really different. The top comics producers there bring out a graphic album every one-and-a-half or two years;* sometimes *they do it in a year. But that's it. They just work and work and work on whatever the thing is, doing the absolute best that they can do, and when they finally have all the pages together it goes to the publisher. The publisher, I'm sure, would like to have very many more, but it's like James Clavell or somebody. The reality is he's only going to bring out a book every couple of years because it takes that long to do it. And it takes that long to do it to their standard. The trouble with the way everything is in the States, where everything is in a periodical, these huge deadlines — which in some cases are*



Sexy women: e reputation;



totally artificial, like whoever said a book had to be monthly, why couldn't it be bimonthly or quarterly —

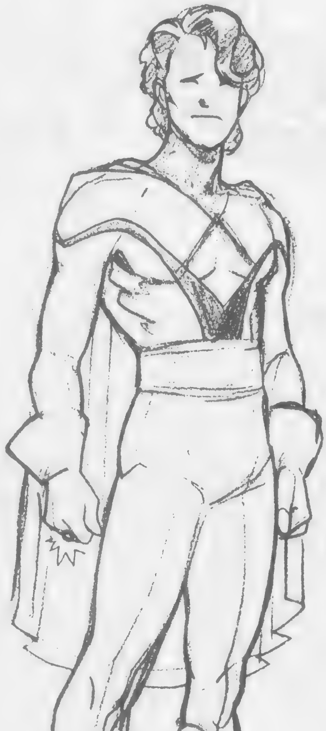
DAK: *Actually, Capital City Distribution says that. And Diamond.* (Laughter.)

BRIAN: Something else you've got to consider is Europe is known for producing, you know, the Mercedes-Benz and the BMW, whereas America is known for producing *the Ford.* That's what we expect. We don't want to pay a lot for it and wait on it. We expect to get it, you know.

JULIA: *But the trouble with that is exactly the kind of dilemma that Adam is in. I think what will happen is what is happening; a lot of people who are under these deadlines, and yet what they are creating is so important to them, they're going to end up doing one-shots and mini-series. A lot more of that has come about in the last five years, and it's usually from people who want to put a lot more quality into a thing and just don't want to have just a bunch of crap. The trouble now is there's so much coming out every month, there's so much crap on the market, it's totally flooded and the sales are watered down and everyone is disgruntled. I look at the whole thing and say something's got to give somewhere, and I think the way a lot of people are going to go is to the mini-series or graphic album.*

DAK: *Well, I'm going to jump into a totally stupid direction here, try to get Adam to say something.* (Laughter.) *For a guy who is associated with drawing really really sexy women, Ghost is a female character but it's sort of like a woman in a large bag where you can't see her. I've just wondered about that, if you thought about that, if you did that deliberately? It's sort of like an Adam Hughes girl but you can't actually see her.*

ADAM: I did it deliberately. It's like, you know, if I just wanted to draw gratuitous flesh, there's a lot better comics than GHOST to do it in. And I *like* the reputation; when nobody's looking I *waller* in it. *(Laughter.)* I secretly beamed with pride when WIZARD dubbed me king of hot babes. I thought that was a little paper Burger King crown that I would wear with pride. But I realize there's a difference between, you know, drawing attractive women in comics because you *like* attractive women — the same way some guys draw lots of *guns* in comics because they're, you know, in the NRA — but if you're just doing it for the sake of doing it then it's just sort of like media masturbation, you know.



I looked at Ghost and I went, "Okay, yeah, she's running around in this skimpy little costume, but she's sort of like she's the first, best female answer to the sort of nocturnal judges like the Shadow or Batman, all these cool pulpy kind of characters." If she's running around with her .38s hanging out all of the time, that really wouldn't be too cool. I thought the book would look better if it looked more operatic, and she sort of sashays through the Arcadia skyline as just this diaphanous shape. Let's face it, she's *supposed* to look at first glance like some sort of spectral image. It's funny — out of all the people that have drawn GHOST so far, I draw her the *least!* I'm sure if somebody did a breast count, I'd be at the bottom of the list. That's something I did on purpose because, you know, there's a right way and a wrong way to do a character. If I was doing — what's some bimbo character?

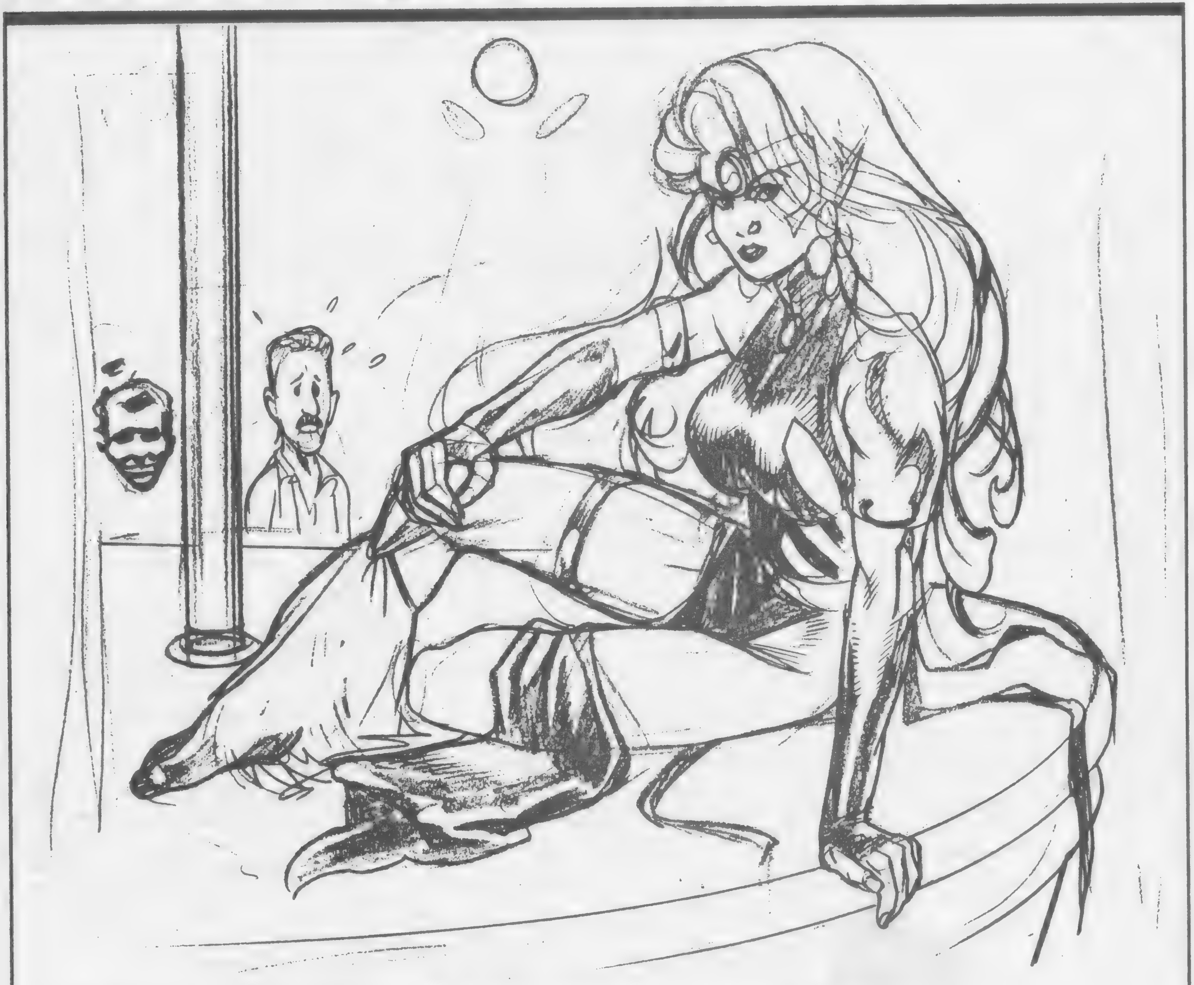
STINE: Lady Death.

ADAM: Actually, I did a LADY DEATH trading card and that exceeded . . . my *hand* hurt after drawing her. *(Laughter.)* It's a little too over the top, literally and figuratively.

BRIAN: Figuratively and figuratively. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: There is a correct way to do Ghost and still make her sexy and attractive, which of course probably sounds extremely chauvinistic. I've *had* that problem. I did a poster for DC Comics, "The Women of the DC Universe" — that started life as a calendar and then it was going to be a portfolio series and then it just ended up being a poster. And I remember Brian and I were up in the poster editor's office, we were talking about it, and this woman came in, "Oh my God, look at Catwoman! Catwoman's waist is smaller than her thighs, no woman is like that, blah blah blah blah blah!" And like, basically, I had *had* it, I just really told her, "Look, okay, I don't look like Superman but I don't go around bitching about it. This is a glamorous industry; it's what we do." I was really

when nobody's looking I *waller* in it."



uncool about that. *(Laughter.)* But it's like, you know, superheroines are supposed to look pretty, superheroes are supposed to be masculine and studly, neither one should be apologized about.

I *did* receive a very nice compliment from a woman at Marvel. Every year I am a *loyal* contributor to their swimsuit issue; I don't know *why* but I am the cornerstone of that. They wanted to turn a Black Widow piece I had done two years ago into a poster. I said sure, why not; it's a little gravy; what do I care? The woman who was in charge of it, I *heard* her flipping through the pages, she was saying, "Oh, look at this, *this* is just so *gratuitous*." I said, "Well, if you're this much against it why are we doing a poster of mine?" And she said, "Well, there's something about yours that isn't insulting." And I felt good about that because that's what I'm *trying* to do. I'm not trying to put anybody down, I'm not trying to *hurt* anybody or *exploit* anybody. It's just . . . it's just what I do. Sounds like I'm trying to justify it.

BRIAN: Yeah, but the cool thing is, you know, from looking at your artwork — I'm an artist so what I'm going to look at is the artwork — someone actually had to *tell* me, "Man, have you seen the knockers on these babes!" Like, if you're very shallow, if you're just looking for something to be pissed off about, you look at the girls that you draw and you're going to be provided with all you need. But the *funny* thing is you pay that attention to *everything*, like the pants on people just really have a romance to them, you know; the hair, the guns, the closet doors. In GHOST just the fact that you turned Arcadia into a living, breathing city, that's *there*. I think a lot of the people that are sort of jumping on your artwork are the sort of people who have a soapbox to get on top of, they're going to use you. But the thing about it is there is so much more there. There are so many other artists drawing stuff where, you know, there's the babe and there's nothing else in the comic that's even worth *looking* at. But the stuff you do, everything has dimension to it.

ADAM: Of course, it's very frustrating when you do that; you draw a picture and it's some sexy superheroine in this really beautiful three-point perspective shot of New York City at sunset, and somebody just looks at it and goes, "Look at those boobs." *(Laughter.)* I remember when I first got the JUSTICE LEAGUE job, one of the things that editor **Andy Helfer** told me to do was work more on the backgrounds, put more establishing shots and backgrounds in. So, I handed in pages on the first issue; one of the pages was the first time I got to draw Fire and Ice, two of the women who were in JUSTICE LEAGUE at the time. It was on *that* page, coincidentally, that I decided to take my sort of editorial direction, I worked on backgrounds, trees and dogs and cars and rigs of every size, I just basically went nuts on it. I handed the page in and Andy looked at it, and sort of typical **Andy Helfer,** cigarette in one hand and silly putty in the other, he goes, "Look at that butt, that's a nice butt." *(Laughter.)* "But

"Hey, it's my interview so we'll talk about

I drew the background like you asked!" "Yeah, but that sure is a nice butt." *(Laughter.)* It's tough.

I guess there's a fine line. And I haven't been dumped on, whether in print or in person, *too* hard. I've actually had some pretty hard-line feminists come up to me at conventions and *talk* to me about how women are treated in comics. No burning bras; it's been peaceful.

DAK: *Well, how did this whole babes thing come about? I mean, was it a deliberate thing, or did it sort of evolve?*

ADAM: I really don't know. I can't remember back that far.

DAK: *Well, you said you had a drawing that if you ever did your sketchbooks or something, a drawing from when you were five or —*

ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *Was that a hot babe?*

ADAM: No, hell no. I grew up very much afraid of God, you know. *(Laughter.)* The first time I drew a picture of a woman, I drew a picture of Supergirl, I was eight or nine, and I remember drawing it hunched over so God couldn't see me drawing it. *(Laughter.)* It was *sinful,* you know. I went to a private Christian school, so basically I had sin waved in front of me all of the time — you never know, some psychoanalyst might read *volumes* into that.

DAK: *Yeah, it was* because *of that.*

ADAM: Yeah. It's tough. I don't remember really when it started. I don't remember when I made a conscious decision to like improve *that* over everything else — and I don't think that I have, you know. I remember at one point when I was first discovering ROCKETEER and getting into **Dave Stevens,** everybody was calling **Dave Stevens** the king of pinup art and I thought, if you have to have a title that's a *cool* one. And I made that sort of like a secret wish, like if that happened to me that would be swell. I've actually talked to Dave about that and he didn't want it, he said I could have it if I wanted.

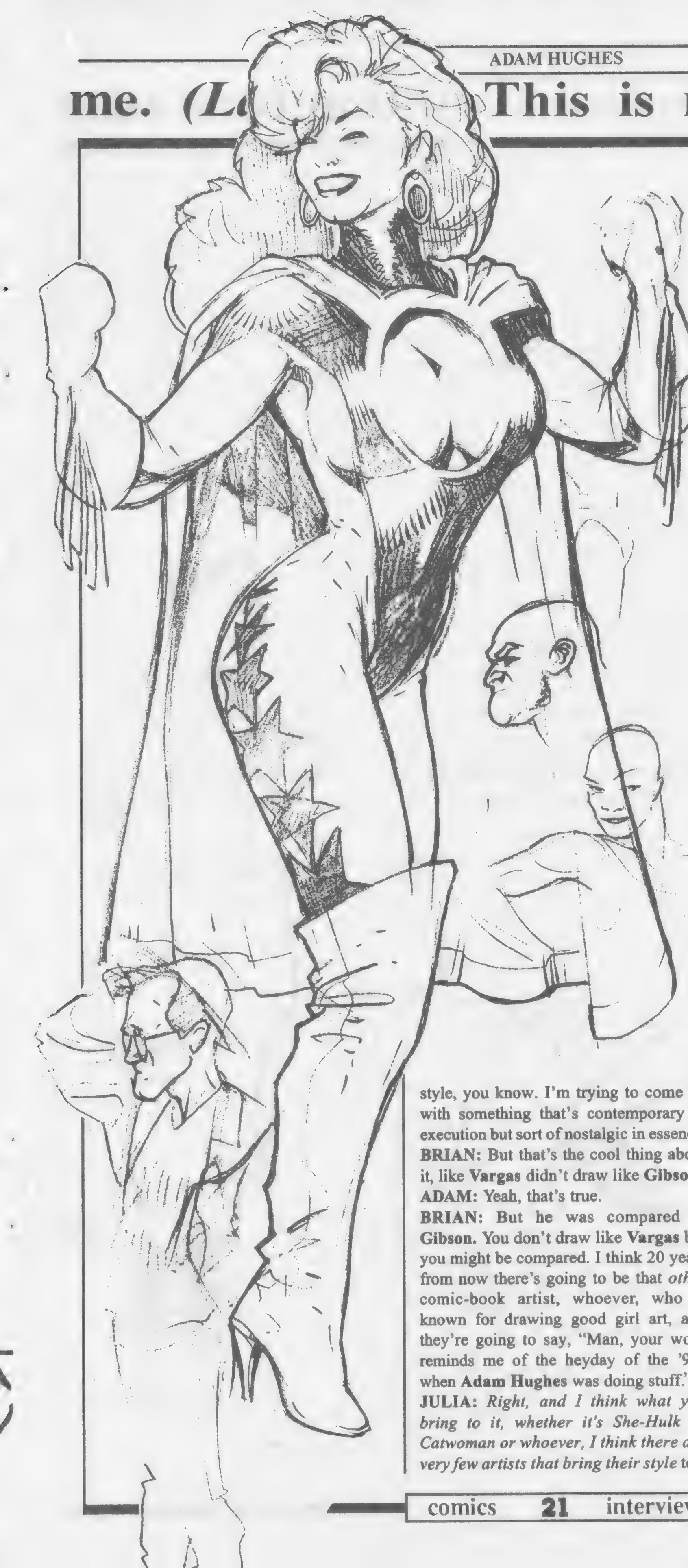
BRIAN: The *neat* thing, what I get a *kick* out of in comics, is that you are appreciated for your artwork, much like all the guys that carried the torch before us. I mean, they didn't all work in comics, but in the commercial field a lot of times people aren't appreciated for their artwork. They're appreciated for the amounts of french fries or telephones that they sell. When you take a look at the guys that we respect, when you take a look at **George Petty** and **Charles Dana Gibson** and **Vargas,** all *these* artists, it's like they were pinup guys who drew really neat-looking babes. It's kind of neat because, you know, they had their girl. It's neat that you actually have the **Adam Hughes** girl, people can look at a woman that you've drawn and say, "That is a classic **Adam Hughes** girl." That's a type of artwork that's dying out but you're actually carrying on that torch.

ADAM: That's funny. I've talked to people about that. I had one collector of classic good girl pinup art come up to me and say, "Since **Dave Stevens** doesn't do too much in the way of comics, you're the only guy keeping that kind of stuff alive." We talked about that. And it's really funny because even though people say I'm one of the few guys doing good girl pinup art in comics, there are others —

DAK: *I was just thinking about Will Meugniot.*

ADAM: Yeah — but hey, it's my interview so we'll talk about me. *(Laughter.)* This is not Congress. So, it's really funny because even though I love really classic good girl art — anybody can tell you that I was born a couple of decades too late; I'm just mired in the '30s and the '40s — but I don't *draw* like that! If I'm doing any kind of good girl art I'm trying to create a '90s comic-book good girl art

me. *(La* This is not Congress.”



style, you know. I'm trying to come up with something that's contemporary in execution but sort of nostalgic in essence.

BRIAN: But that's the cool thing about it, like **Vargas** didn't draw like **Gibson.**

ADAM: Yeah, that's true.

BRIAN: But he was compared to **Gibson.** You don't draw like **Vargas** but you might be compared. I think 20 years from now there's going to be that *other* comic-book artist, whoever, who is known for drawing good girl art, and they're going to say, “Man, your work reminds me of the heyday of the '90s when **Adam Hughes** was doing stuff.”

JULIA: *Right, and I think what you bring to it, whether it's She-Hulk or Catwoman or whoever, I think there are very few artists that bring their style* to a *character rather than have the character dominate how they're going to draw them. I think that's really the trick of what makes your rendering of any character different from so many others; yours is very distinctive, you know immediately that you did it.*

DAK: *When you said you were getting into the character of Ghost . . . I don't know who to credit. I'm not slighting anybody, but there's no such thing as a bad character. People say that — but there just isn't. There's a way to do a character that is really intrinsically appropriate to that character.*

ADAM: Right.

DAK: *And not everybody can find it. And if you have a team doing some company-owned character and they haven't found it, you should look for somebody who can. Look at how many times some of these characters have been revitalized by people who just locked into something that was an aspect of the character, that once they locked in you could tell it was always there yet it never was actually in any of the things that were done. So, what's interesting is you are thinking: What can I get that's really intrinsic to this character?*

BRIAN: Also, like DAK was saying, when you handle a character, whether it's a male character or a female character, it's kind of neat because in comics there's this sort of Cookie Punch thing where *all* of the characters are drawn basically the same, just place whoever's costume on this head.

DAK: *I hate it when they do that to Spider-Man. When he stands around with, like, Superman's physique, I'm like, “Jesus Christ, this is supposed to be Spider-Man.”*

BRIAN: Yeah, it's all *like* that. But what I think what's really neat is even when you're doing a pinup, it could be Whatever Girl or Whatever Guy, you can *look* at that character and it's really neat because you're so tuned in with the character you can *see* what the character is thinking often times, you can look at the character and tell what the character is feeling and thinking. I think that's *fantastic* because instead of the character being just a two-dimensional drawing it becomes *real.* You can *look* at the character, *see* her feeling this. It's kind of a neat thing, an extra dimension that you add to the character.

DAK: *As somebody from the text side of the comic book medium to somebody on the visual side of it, how do you actually do that? When you decide to do a particular expression, like this person*

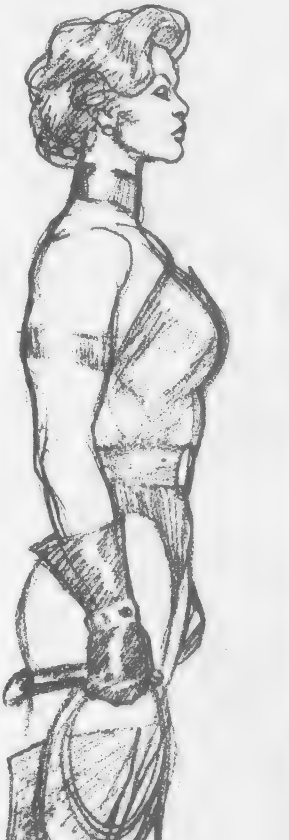
“I get so into these characters that

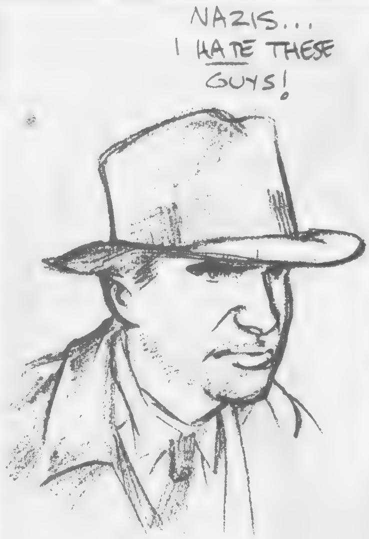
should be thinking this, what's going through your mind as far as how to actually execute it and get it to look like that?

ADAM: You mean?

DAK: *The actual expression to represent it. Do you just have a repertoire of endless expressions for whatever they're thinking.*

ADAM: Well, there's two approaches that I take. One is basically getting to know a character so well, as if I were an actor performing this character on stage, basically deciding if I was delivering this line I would be thinking *this* because of everything that's happened to this character in his life before this, whether it's been seen by the reader or not. Everything in their life up to that point, if they're saying this they've got to be thinking that. Okay, so that *thought* engenders this facial expression because their whole life has created this person at this point.



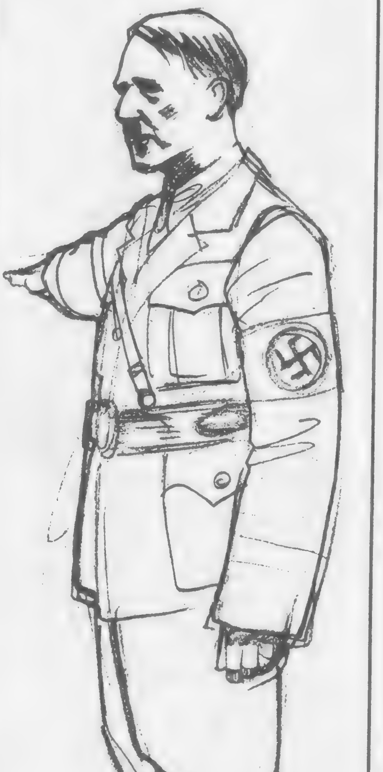

NAZIS...
I HATE THESE GUYS!

Other times, if it's a character I don't know very well, what I'll do is I'll *pick* somebody, somebody I know or an actor or actress or a famous person, and pattern that character after that, then it just becomes mimicry. Basically, like when I first started working on JUSTICE LEAGUE I wasn't this sophisticated — *(Laughter.)* **Kevin Maguire** told me, “Yeah, I patterned Blue Beetle after **Bruce Willis.**” That's all I needed to know, David Addison is going to be Blue Beetle from now on. That was something that made Blue Beetle a real easy character to draw.

DAK: *You should turn and bow in the direction of the Stan Lee mecca, because what you've just said is what Stan Lee used to say about all of the Marvel characters. How he wrote those characters was he cast them in his mind. He didn't tell you, the reader, but like he saw Olivier playing this character; that's how he kept this character in character. He had them all in his head. That's how they stayed in character, why they had unique voices. What bothered me in those days about DC Comics was their characters were just like what Brian was saying about the art, from the text side the characters were all interchangeable. Steve Gerber said it best: he had outgrown DC at the point where he realized it made no difference if the story had Superman or Batman or Wonder Woman; you could simply take the balloons and swap them around and it made no difference. They were nothing but ciphers acting out a plot, and consequently they were all the same.*

JULIA: *There was one thing that has always really really bugged you, when one character says something —*

DAK: *Any time you've actually written a character and given a lot of thought to it, really kind of lived that character, it just grates on you so much. She-Hulk was one in particular, because aside from the first issue I sort of formed and molded her — and I've got to say that*



I trea the eop now.”

contrary perhaps to many of the people that worked for Tom DeFalco at the time he was editor-in-chief, I actually liked *the way Tom wrote a lot of the Marvel books. But I just picked up the other day a FANTASTIC FOUR and he'd got something so* wrong *about the She-Hulk that I* went *ranting around the house; at this late date, long long after all this was* published. (Laughter.) *But She-Hulk said she'd just come from a heavy exercise session, you know, and I'm like, "No, she's a hulk! Hulks aren't hulks because of exercises, hulks are hulks! She didn't* exercise *to become the She-Hulk, she is the She-Hulk! This is bogus!"* (Laughter.) *It isn't true to the character. I wonder, artwise, whether you go through the same thing? I'm sorry I interrupted your train of thought, but I haven't heard a lot of people say that; the other person notable in my memory who ever said that was Stan Lee.*

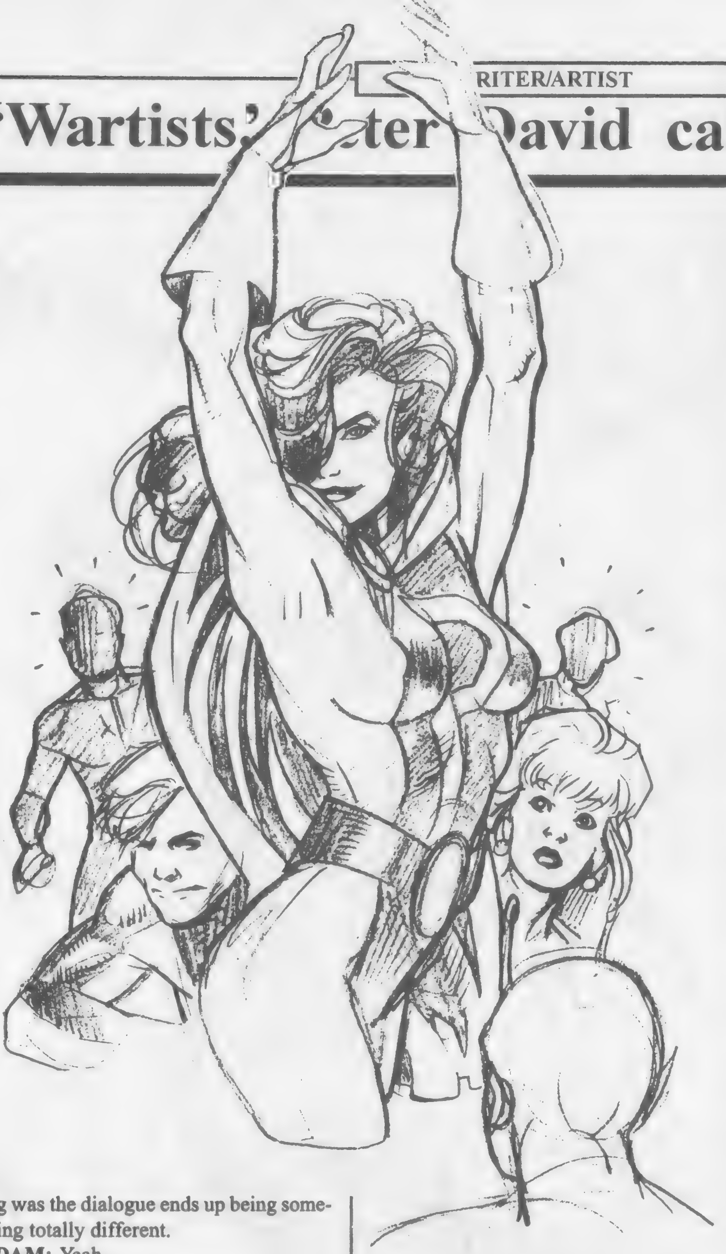
ADAM: ADAM HUGHES PRESENTS! *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *But do you run into that with the art? What happens later when you look at somebody who has carried on the series?*

ADAM: I don't look. I get so into these characters that I treat them as people I know. And it's like . . . when you leave the book you're breaking up, you're moving on to someone else. So it's kind of like *I'm* not going to go back periodically and see if they're doing better without me, you take a little solace thinking they may be doing worse. Maybe they're *suffering* without you: Good, that's the way the universe should work. *(Laughter.)*

BRIAN: When you're working in Marvel style where you're given the plot, no matter what you're given you *think* in these terms of casting the characters, feeling the characters out, putting the *passion* behind the situation. When you're working in Marvel style and you *do* all of that, you're thinking of how these characters are going to be acting, what these characters are going to be saying. Then you're finished with it and it goes to the writer or to a different person who does the script. Often times the next time we see it is when it's on the stand, the first time we're seeing dialogue placed on the characters is the same time the fan sees it, and what you were think-

“Wartists,” Peter David calls us. Nobody



ing was the dialogue ends up being something totally different.

ADAM: Yeah.

BRIAN: What's really funny about watching Adam do the pages is a lot of the times when he gets something that's plot he'll actually sort of write in dialogue, just as a joke. And usually the dialogue that Adam writes in is *great* dialogue, just really fun stuff to read. But then when you get it back from off the stands it's total wooden dialogue, you know.

JULIA: *Don't you think that that says a lot for the total creator, the person who writes and draws?*

ADAM: "Wartists," as **Peter David** calls us. *(Laughter.)* Yeah. I mean, let's face it, that's pretty much how comics started, one guy would write and draw the strip. I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, you know the history better than I do —

DAK: *No, I don't.* (Laughter.)

JULIA: *In Europe that's how it is; sometimes there's a collaboration, but nine times out of ten they're doing it all.*

ADAM: But it's just that; it's a collaboration, not an assembly line — or it should be. American comics, when they got away from just reprinting the funnies and started coming up with their own stuff, that did well so they wanted more then more then more, so it got to the point where they couldn't do more. Then the editor stepped in to say, "You write it, he'll draw it, we'll get somebody else to letter it, somebody else to ink it, somebody else to color it." This sort of assembly line for comics became the status quo; that's what I have come to believe by reading and talking to learned people, that's what happened. It started off where one person would basically do the strip, then down the road other people were involved in the process to speed up production. And I know writers don't *like* that, because for every writing job that some editor gives to an artist that's one less writing job for a writer — nobody wants to see himself written out of a job.

DAK: *Least of all a writer.* (Laughter.)

ADAM: I love collaboration because I don't come up with the most brilliant ideas on my own. When somebody *tells* me an idea I'll go, "Oh! Oh! let me topspin this back atcha, whatcha think of this!" And we have more *fun* with it, *that's* the kind of thing I like. But what I don't like, like I said earlier, is people working at different ends. If I read a plot and the main character is a very verbose, overactive character, I've got him just *screaming* his *guts* out, his eyes are bulging and little bits of spit are coming out of his mouth, everybody else is leaning back and their hair's blowing because he's just basically saying the most gut wrenching thing; and then after I've drawn this plot Marvel style the scripter has the character saying "hmm." *(Laughter.)* It took me an afternoon to draw that panel, and that was a wasted afternoon because the story is not conveyed. That's my biggest complaint.

You see, I *personally* believe that the penciller is the architect of the look of the book. The inker has to follow what the penciller lays down; the colorist has to go in the direction where it leads. I don't know if that's an egotistical thing to say, and that's not to downplay the job of the editor or the writer, but let's face it, when it's in the purview of the writer and the editor it's their *ideas*. Even in their most definitive form they are still abstractions. When they start to get put down on paper, there's a visual medium, then they start to turn into something, people can see what we've got going here. If I'm saying something wrong I'm sorry, but that's what I feel *my* job is on a comic book. When a writer hands me a story, even if it's an **Alan Moore** story where basically it's one page, one piece of notebook paper filled with writing per *panel,* it *still* can be visually interpreted so many different ways. But once the penciller starts doing his job the book starts to have a look, and I take my job doing that very seriously.

That's what I did on GHOST. I could have just drawn GHOST as sort of a generic T&A superhero book, but that's *not* what the material needs. The material needs something *more.* The material needs some direction, the material *needs* — it's *begging* to be drawn a certain way. I have no idea why I went off on that tirade. *(Laughter.)* I got so into it I lost the original point.

BRIAN: But it sounded cool.

wants to see himself written out of a job."

ADAM: Should we go back to another tangent?

BRIAN: On what you're saying, I would back you up on that. I think the artist is the director of the movie. If you have a damn *good* writer who really lays down some good stuff, you know, and really sparks some ideas going, then it's tossed in the hands of a really good artist, you can have some great stuff.

ADAM: What you just did, *everyone* at one point in their career has made the Hollywood comparison, what each person corresponds to. The only time in my life that I ever thought that **Barbara Kesel** was full of shit — *(laughter)* **Barbara Kesel** is one of my dearest friends in comics, I love her greatly — but there was one point where she said to me with a straight face, "You know, the editor on a comic book is like the director of a movie." My heart skipped a beat, I stopped breathing, and I looked at her and I said, "What do you mean by that?" And it was kind of funny because I do agree with Brian — if you want to get into the whole thing the editor is the producer; the writer is the writer. *(Laughter.)* It's an easy leap to make. The penciller is the guy who basically, you know, comes in and, let's face it, calls the shots.

DAK: *Wait, wait, you'll leap up and kill me, but does the penciller not correspond to the storyboard artist?*

BRIAN: No. You don't look at the storyboard artist's work; you look at the director's work.

DAK: *He's telling the story in pictures but he's not the director.*

BRIAN: Yeah. The artist is the director, the storyboard artist, the cinematographer, the casting director, and a lot of the time most of the actors.

ADAM: Sorry. He's right.

BRIAN: Sorry. We're pigs; we're going to take it all. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I'm getting myself further and further in dutch here.

JULIA: *Having been an editor, what do you think?*

DAK: *Well, I think one of my super powers is I am the world's greatest editor.* (Laughter.) *But I don't like editing. It's the world's most unappreciated thing. When you're the editor sometimes there's a huge pile of shit but there's a few good things in it, you have to find them and say, "Look, a couple of diamonds from that pile of shit, take these and shine them up and put them in a setting and you could be a star."* (Laughter.) *That's what I think I do well, and I don't just do it in comics and stories; I do it in everyday life. I take pieces of loose material, like those rocks out there, and I edit them into a landscape. I think of all of that as editing: What do I have to work with and how can I make something out of it that's got a structure and a style and a coherence? It's my lot in life.*

Despite all of that, I find most editors in comics so objectionable that they should — in the words of one of my friends who is now himself an editor in comics, Dwight Zimmerman — they should be shot in the streets like dogs at dawn. (Laughter.) *I have next to no use for editors; it's just a bunch of useless, bureaucratic people who are mucking up the works. I'm on both sides of that,*

“I *want t*[illegible]rk with other people. There are

but they’re not *editors — they’re just bullshit artists, and that’s like almost anybody who is an editor who is reading this. But there are some good ones and that’s what’s so cool. There are some people who are so good they can edit themselves. So, all these sweeping statements are not applicable, because there are some people who can write and draw and do it so well you are in awe.*

ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *There are some people who can write who can’t draw, there are some people who can draw and can’t write. Every time that you think you can grasp that thing into some rule, there’s always some exception. It all* really *comes down to the individual. To get back to the movie thing, if we were all sitting here discussing movies because we were all in movies, that director who just sits on*

bunches of writ I wan k with *dearly.*”

his ass and everybody else carries it, his storyboard artist is the real director of that movie. You can only really speak for yourself. Like, when Brian said how you would write in dialogue and people would replace it with wooden dialogue, aren't you then heading in the writing direction?

ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *You're heading into that area so you won't have to deal with those people throwing out your good dialogue for crap.*

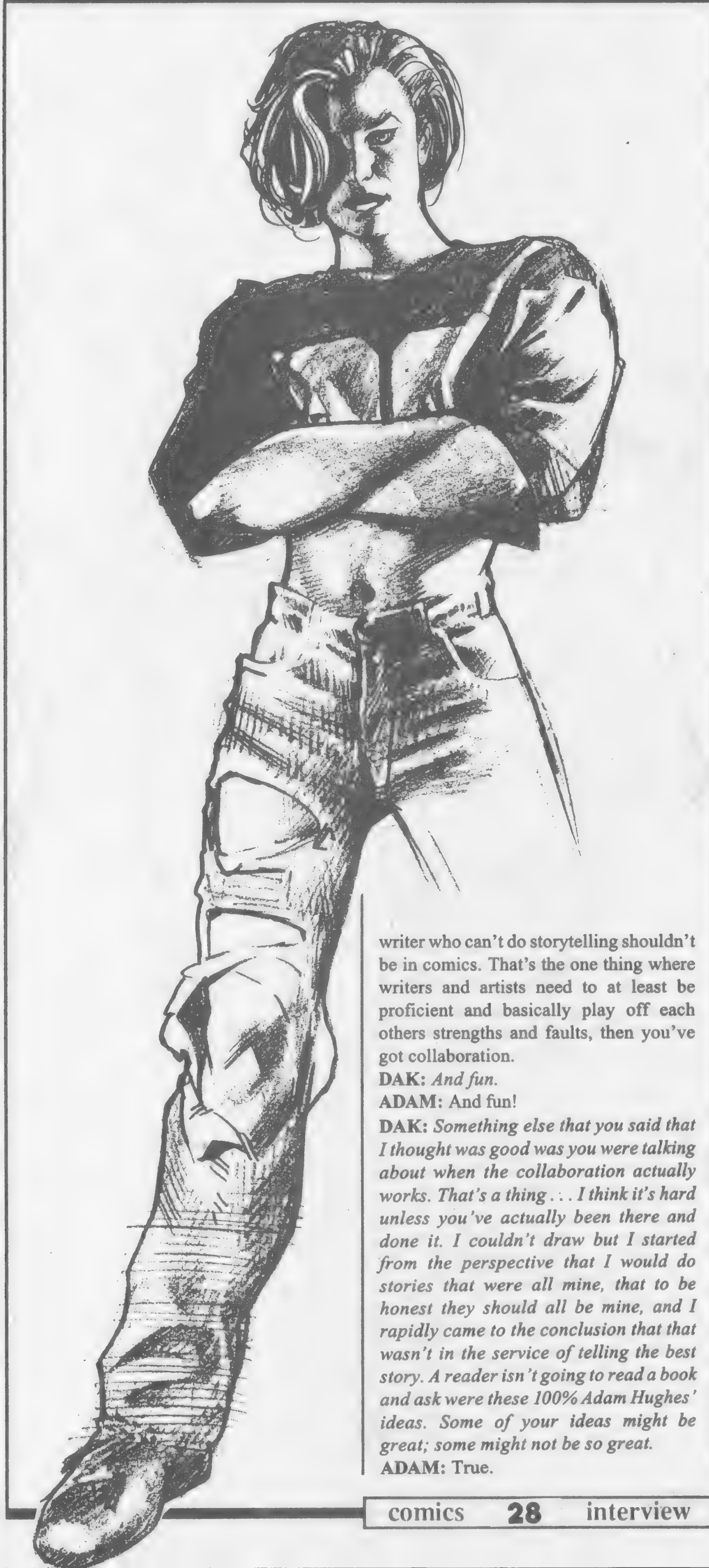
ADAM: But it's not because of any dissatisfaction with the material I've done before. I've been able to do a percentage of my capacity, my full capacity. But I *want* to work with other people; there are *bunches* of writers who I want to work with *dearly.* Sometimes I don't even want to call myself a writer; it's just if I have an idea for a story I want to do that story. Gee, I happen to have ideas for the dialogue, okay I'll put them down on paper — that's how I'm trying to convince editors to let me do that, you know. Let me plot it. If the plot sucks we'll get a writer but if the plot's good we'll proceed to the drawing of it; I'll draw it. Then we'll go to the scripting phase and I'll script it and if the scripting sucks we'll get in a script doctor.

DAK: *You seem so extraordinarily logical, like you're either a well-grounded human being or people who have worked with you will be reading this and going, "But that's not how it was!"* (Laughter.) *But it all makes such perfect sense. That's exactly how the world should work. If you can do it then you* should *do it.*

BRIAN: Also . . . I don't know directly for Adam, but for a lot of the guys at the studio there's a lot of frustration that comes from the fact that as illustrators, as comic-book illustrators, a lot of us know storytelling. We know what works visually; we know how to get a character from point A to point B; we've all studied storytelling as an artform, a visual sort of writing, sequential graphics. I think with a lot of the artists who are becoming writers, a lot of it is not we just want to become writers because we feel that we could do a better job, but to a large extent a lot of times the scripts that we get . . . we don't feel that we can do a *worse* job. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I honestly think that one of the worthless chimps in comics is basically a writer who can't think visually, because he's a detriment to a good comic book. If you and I were to sit down and come up with a comic book right now, my speciality is figure drawing and rendering and anatomy and stuff like that; your purview is nouns and verbs and prose and snappy chatter and all that kind of stuff. But the one thing you and I would share in common is storytelling, okay. The one thing that you and I can mix freely about is we both have to be masters of storytelling. An artist who can't do storytelling shouldn't be in comics. A

“Anybody who puts ego above the story’s



writer who can’t do storytelling shouldn’t be in comics. That’s the one thing where writers and artists need to at least be proficient and basically play off each others strengths and faults, then you’ve got collaboration.

DAK: *And fun.*

ADAM: And fun!

DAK: *Something else that you said that I thought was good was you were talking about when the collaboration actually works. That’s a thing . . . I think it’s hard unless you’ve actually been there and done it. I couldn’t draw but I started from the perspective that I would do stories that were all mine, that to be honest they should all be mine, and I rapidly came to the conclusion that that wasn’t in the service of telling the best story. A reader isn’t going to read a book and ask were these 100% Adam Hughes’ ideas. Some of your ideas might be great; some might not be so great.*

ADAM: True.

DAK: *They’re going to look for what’s a good story, well told. That’s what I think comes out of the best collaborations, is like you said earlier, when you throw some ideas, ideas that sparkle. When the collaborators are both good they can point out weaknesses and strengths and play on that in the service of telling a story — that’s the ultimate thing that you’re doing, and that’s why I think everyone keeps comparing movies and comics even though there are a lot of differences.*

ADAM: Sure.

DAK: *Everything else, including ego, should be subservient to that.*

ADAM: Sure! Anybody who puts ego and personal interests above the story’s interests, that person doesn’t need to be working with me on a comic. It’s like I’ll tell every editor that I work with, “Look, you’re probably going to get a migraine and an ulcer and male pattern baldness working with me, but I’m not trying to be difficult; I’m not trying to be a *prima donna;* any time I argue with you I’m arguing with you to make the story better, to make it a good comic.” Disclaimer: Before you smoke this pack of cigarettes, you know, understand, that I will be unhealthy for you. *(Laughter.)*

I was talking to **Keri Kowalski** at DC, she was like, “I love your work, I want to work with you sometime.” I said, “Oh, no you don’t!” *(Laughter.)* “You sound like a nice person — you don’t need me.” I need hardened, grizzled stevedores of editors. I wasn’t put on this earth to task an editor’s patience, you know, but I have a single-minded desire to make really good comics and sometimes I will make life really difficult for other people working on the book. Hey, they’re just trying to do their jobs, feed their kids, be home in time for BAYWATCH; to hell with that, my whole life is geared towards producing work so I can go, “That is *me,* that’s the *sum* of me.” Nothing less than my best at that particular time and date will do. I’ll be an asshole about something that I think is great for the book. But I’m not inflexible.

DAK: *Well, what’s this thing that you are writing?*

ADAM: It’s part of the Blanc Noir line for Dark Horse! That’s the Gaijin Studios imprint. We’re all trying — all us wartists *(laughter)* — we’re trying to do our own creator-owned characters.

BRIAN: We feel that we can’t do any worse, not that we can do better.

ADAM: Yeah. All of us at the studio are doing our own books. I’m doing one, too.

interests doesn’t need to work with me.”

DAK: *Mini-series?*

ADAM: Yeah, yeah, they’re *all* going to be mini-series. We’re really bowing before the great ones before us; the guys who did the Legends stuff at Dark Horse really have hit upon a great American way of doing comic books. You know, don’t try to squeeze talent into a monthly grind. **Mike Mignola** does HELLBOY, and he does it all of the time, but he does it without sacrificing the quality. Same thing with **Frank Miller’s** SIN CITY. For some reason **Mike Allred** is able to do MADMAN monthly, and God bless him for doing it. **Geof Darrow** is doing something and it comes out once every three years. **Paul Chadwick,** we’re still waiting on CONCRETE. Like, that’s the cool thing about it, if we can get a little bit of the pie, too. There’s just no way in heaven or hell **Brian Stelfreeze** or **Adam Hughes** or **Cully Hamner** or **Jason Pearson** are going to do a monthly book, but they’re going to do these mini-series and we guarantee it’s the best they can do. You’re not getting any chimp work when you get a Blanc Noir comic.

JULIA: *Blanc Noir, are they all black-and-white, then?*

ADAM: No, no, it’s . . . oh, boy, we can’t talk about the title; that’s a whole ’nother interview.

BRIAN: Yeah. Everybody hates us for calling it Blanc Noir.

DAK: *I find it humorous. It’s very . . . French.*

BRIAN: We’re all French. Very few people know that. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: But the . . . yeah, it’s where we’re going to be doing stuff.

DAK: *That’s forthcoming.*

ADAM: At some point.

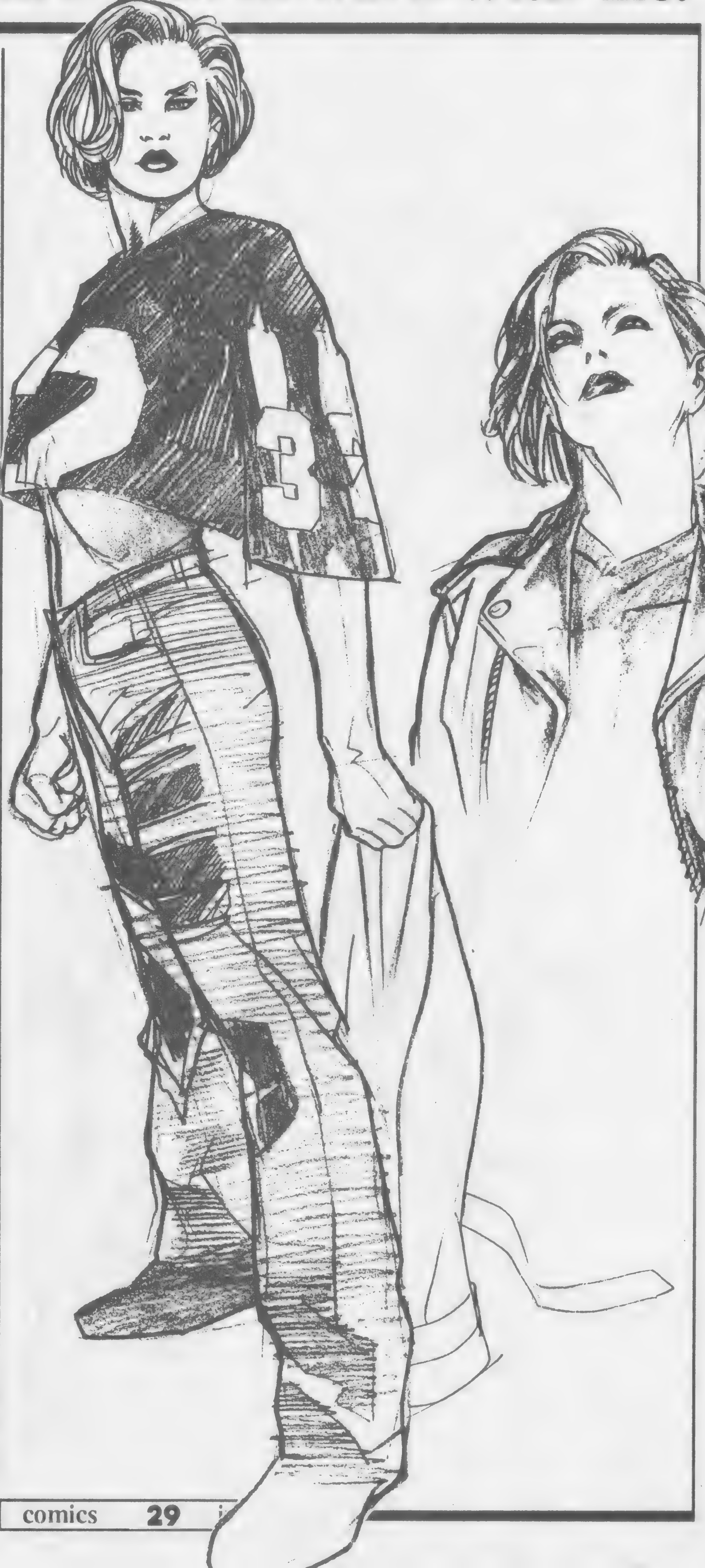
DAK: *When you’re damn well ready.*

ADAM: I’m still wandering around aimlessly in the fallout of the GHOST fiasco. It’s kind of like, “Uh, Dark Horse is *wise*.” Dark Horse is not promoting or announcing anything until they’ve got—

BRIAN: They don’t trust you.

ADAM: I tell everybody I work with, “If you *dare* solicit something I’m drawing before you’ve got it in your hands, you’re a bigger *fool* than me. Don’t ever *ever!* Wait until you’ve got all the pencilled pages in your hands.” I know that sounds terrible but it’s true. See, I’ve made the mistake of the project I have come up with for Blanc Noir is, the more I think about it, bigger than my capacity to write well. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Now you have a* real *problem because it’s creator owned, you conceived it, so how can you ever find somebody who can execute it—if it’s not*



"We had a big discussion about Batman's

you — to your specifications? It's a tall order.

ADAM: It's tough, I would never put anybody through that. It would be my responsibility.

JULIA: *Perhaps if you understand your own plot, which one would hope you would, and you have the capacity to draw that plot, at that point if you don't feel you can get all of the nuances that you want by doing the script yourself then you could always have somebody script it.*

DAK: *Cast the right scriptor.*

ADAM: It's kind of tough, if I'm going to say I am not up to this job even though I created this job —

JULIA: *But the thing is that you can always edit your scriptor, you can. You can then be your own script doctor.*

DAK: *Jumping back, because for some reason all of this puts me in mind of what you said at the outset about Todd's strategy and you thinking it was good but didn't seem the thing for you —*

nipples. Damn them to hell! It's so *wrong*."

JULIA: (Prior to making her way past the library in the rustic COMICS INTERVIEW mountain hideaway home to the fully stocked wet bar, where she will freshen everyone's drinks.) *What's in this? Rye? Scotch? Bourbon?*

ADAM: That's DAK's drink. *(Laughter.)* I had ginger ale, kids.

DAK: Oh, come on, tell 'em the truth — he's having ginger ale and shooting up. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I'm sorry, I said "heroine" not "heroin." Is this interview going well? *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *I'm not the one to ask. It's* your *interview.*

ADAM: It's your book.

DAK: *I think it's going well.*

BRIAN: You're looking huge, man, you're looking huge. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: Brian's in the gym spotting me, "You're looking huge, man."

BRIAN: Pump, man, pump! *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Hey, if the thing is about getting across stuff that's important, this is much better than one of those starchy —*

ADAM: I'm just terrified I'm coming across as an asshole.

BRIAN: No way, man, I'd *stop* you if you were. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: It's just every time I've been interviewed . . . it's like I really lean into the sarcasm a lot, and boy, that just doesn't come across in print.

DAK: *No, nor does irony, really.*

ADAM: Then people go, "Well, this jerk's really full of himself." *(Laughter.)* That's my biggest fear. Stine and I have talked about this, my biggest fear is to be misinterpreted. Not misunderstood, because that makes me feel like Mighty Joe Young or something. *(Laughter.)* It's like, you know, we talk about correct English and trying to get your point across, and we had a big discussion about Batman's nipples. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *I like that you keep all of these things in perspective.*

ADAM: From the new movie, we were having a big discussion about it at the studio; and being levelheaded intelligent adults we were trying to say our piece without stepping on anybody's toes, and agreeing to disagree. And Stine was pointing out that I wasn't making myself clear, I was leaving myself open to misinterpretation because of how I was voicing my opinion. That's the one thing I *don't* want to do. If I'm going to do an interview, or if I am going to talk with a friend, or if I'm going to have a discussion about whether or not Batman should have nipples, it's like I better make sure that they know exactly what I'm saying. I don't want somebody going away going, "Well, gee, I seem to think he may perhaps be in favor of Batman's nipples, possibly." *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Well, as long as we're on the subject of Batman's nipples, what's the deal there?*

ADAM: Damn them all to hell! It's so *wrong,* in my opinion.

BRIAN: It's so incredibly wrong. I will not paint Batman with nipples.

DAK: *Have you been asked to?*

BRIAN: They know not to ask me.

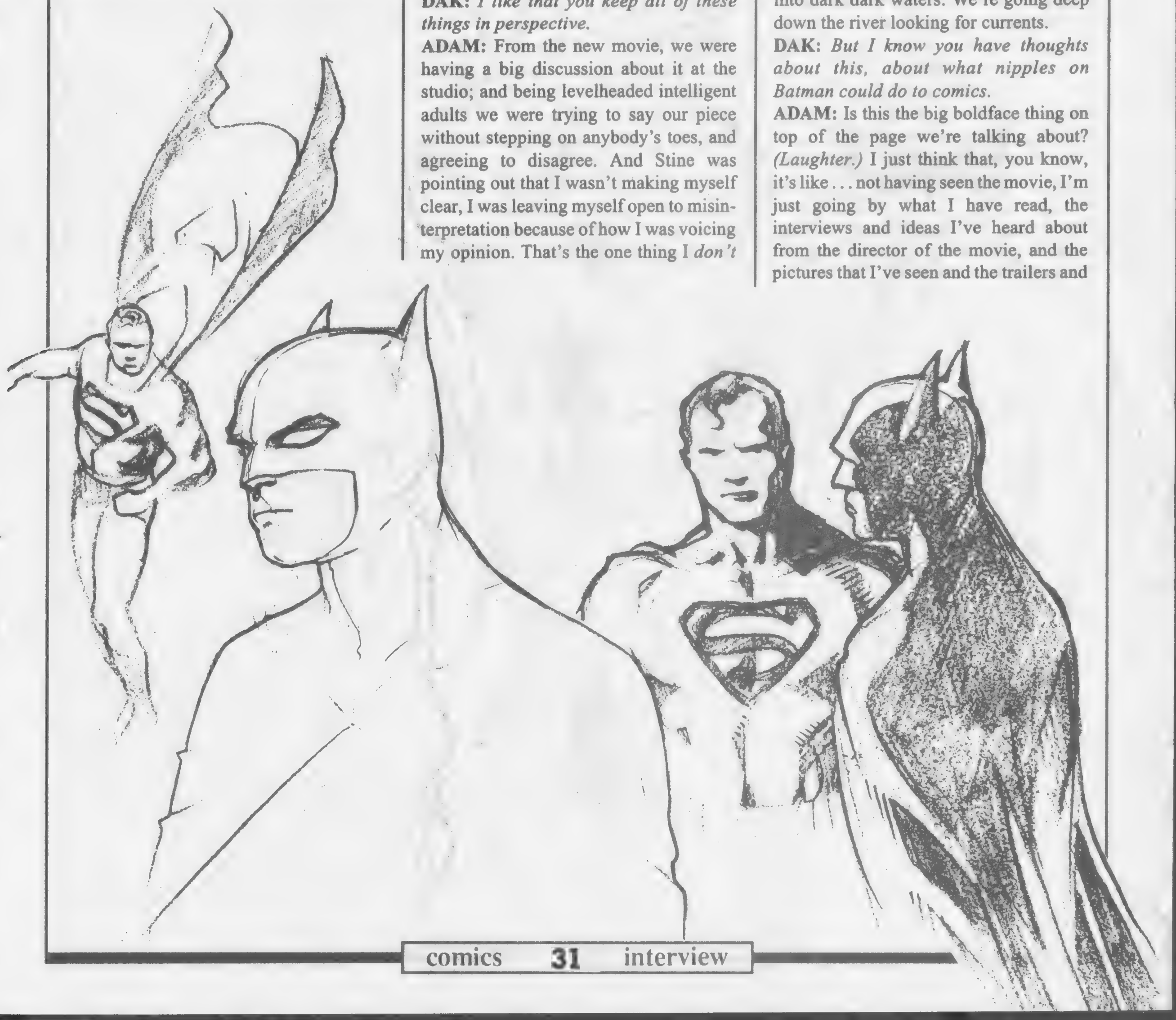
ADAM: It's just an unwritten law —

DAK: *What's wrong with Batman with nipples?*

ADAM: Oh, gosh, this interview is going into dark dark waters. We're going deep down the river looking for currents.

DAK: *But I know you have thoughts about this, about what nipples on Batman could do to comics.*

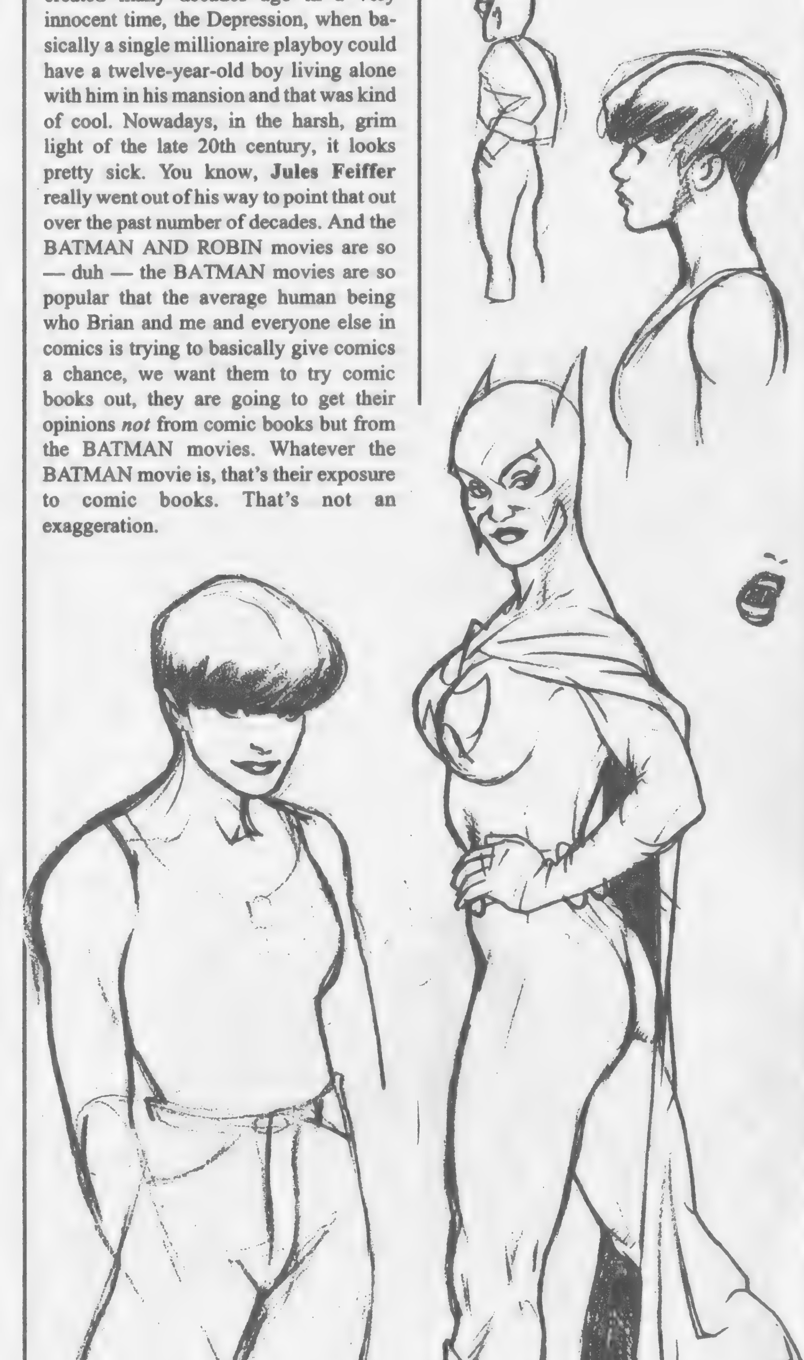
ADAM: Is this the big boldface thing on top of the page we're talking about? *(Laughter.)* I just think that, you know, it's like . . . not having seen the movie, I'm just going by what I have read, the interviews and ideas I've heard about from the director of the movie, and the pictures that I've seen and the trailers and



"If BATMAN FOREVER is homoerotic by

stuff. I might change this opinion once I've seen the movie.

But, you know, Batman and Robin were created many decades ago in a very innocent time, the Depression, when basically a single millionaire playboy could have a twelve-year-old boy living alone with him in his mansion and that was kind of cool. Nowadays, in the harsh, grim light of the late 20th century, it looks pretty sick. You know, **Jules Feiffer** really went out of his way to point that out over the past number of decades. And the BATMAN AND ROBIN movies are so — duh — the BATMAN movies are so popular that the average human being who Brian and me and everyone else in comics is trying to basically give comics a chance, we want them to try comic books out, they are going to get their opinions *not* from comic books but from the BATMAN movies. Whatever the BATMAN movie is, that's their exposure to comic books. That's not an exaggeration.



Look at how the BATMAN TV series from the 1960s colored people's perceptions of comics. It took DARK KNIGHT in the '80s before people realized the TV show was not really what the comic book was about. I'm worried about being misinterpreted, as I said earlier, and it's kind of like if John Q. Public goes out and sees the BATMAN movie and the BATMAN movie is rife with homoeroticism — which really *isn't* there in the comics, *wasn't* the original intent of the characters; I don't think Batman and Robin were intended to be a subtextual essay on the state of the American mind — if BATMAN FOREVER is homoerotic by intent then there is a potential that it could raise a controversy. Warner Bros. Pictures and **Joel Schumacher** and none of those people would be hurt by that, but it has the potential to hurt comics.

Comics are the little kid on the block. The big bullies, whether they be Congressional wives or pressure groups or researchers, they want to pick on the littlest kid on the block. I am just being selfish, from my own personal point of view I don't want somebody to come pick on comics because of a bad judgment call somebody else made.

DAK: *So, it's the nipples that bother you, but not the cod pieces?* (Laughter.)

ADAM: Well, I don't know, DAK, I looked at the nipples *before* I looked at the cod pieces. *(Laughter.)* What are *you* trying to say?

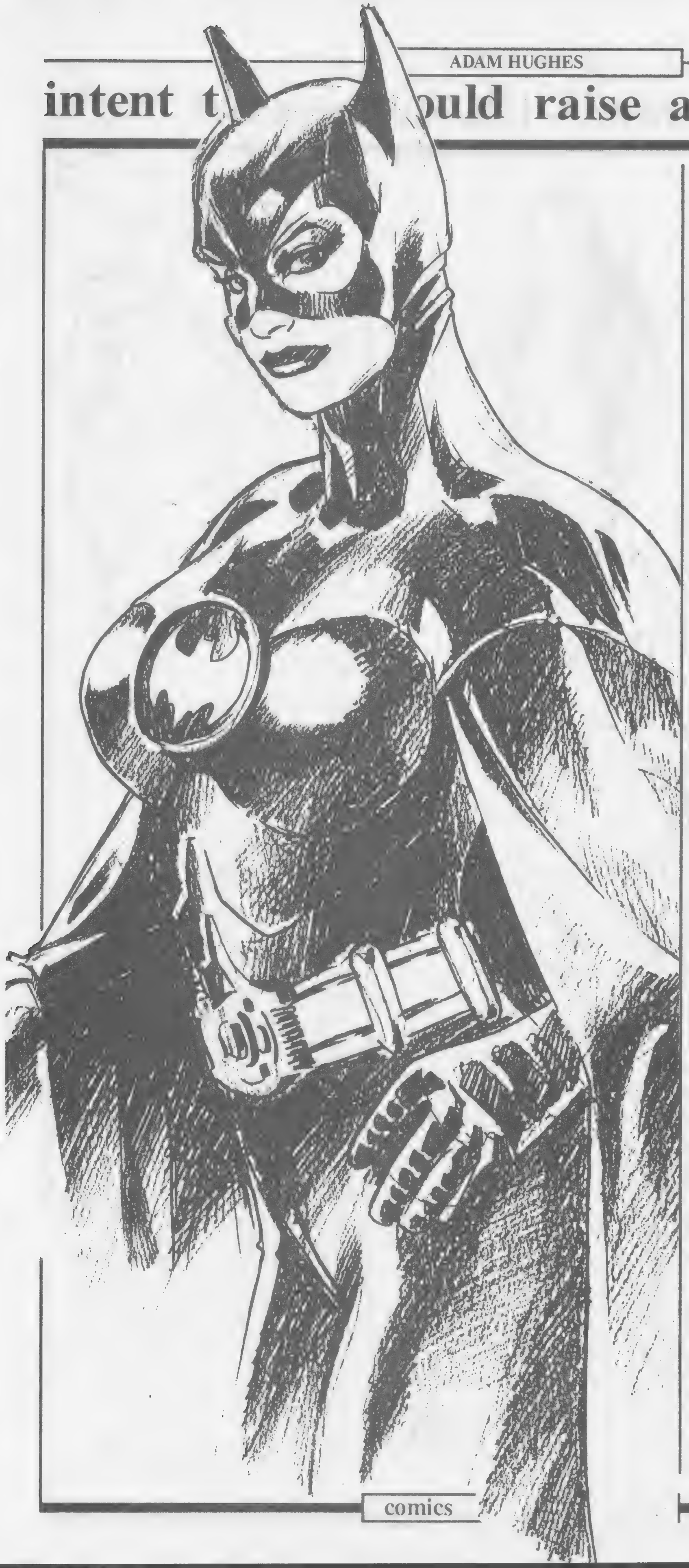
DAK: *I'm tired of ass fucking.* (Laughter.)

BRIAN: I think something that's really weird with the BATMAN movie, with *all* the BATMAN movies, what they do is your average person who doesn't know anything about comics — and, you know, sorry, we are trying to make this into literature of some sort — but your average person who doesn't know anything about comics is going to *get* their opinion of comics *from* the movie, they still don't really know *anything* about comics.

ADAM: Right.

BRIAN: That's plain and simple. In the TV show, you know — you were *working* in comics a little bit after that DAK— the TV show basically just *pissed* on everything that you were doing. And now the movie, no matter how well **Frank Miller** did with DARK KNIGHT, no matter how well he did with YEAR ONE, no matter how many *great* stories all these great artists and great writers have woven over the last 25 years, the *farce* that is the BATMAN movie just slams it back to the TV show. The second movie, you know — when I say to people I do covers for

intent t ould raise a controversy.”



BATMAN, I can tell they're thinking: Yeah, penguins with rocket launchers, that's what you do. It's not! I try to be a little more serious than that, you know. But that's going to be the public opinion. It slams us back.

JULIA: *It does, but eventually it kind of goes and swings around. I mean, they really did a tremendous amount of crap with the TARZAN movies, pissed on everything Edgar Rice Burroughs ever wrote, and then they did GREYSTOKE. People we know who never have been TARZAN fans, it's their absolute favorite movie ever. So,* hopefully *someone will come up with something with the right vision —*

ADAM: That promise of a safe harbor, of somebody producing a *true* comic book movie, won't help us through the potential storm of controversy.

STINE: No, definitely not.

ADAM: I don't mind discussion, I don't mind a little controversy, I don't mind a little anarchy to basically get people to think; but it's when people are thinking with misconceptions, when people go into court not knowing the facts, when people get their opinions about comic books from something they saw on 60 MINUTES or THE 700 CLUB, it's frustrating. "Have you been into a comics shop lately? *Ever?"*

Here's a good example: An issue of SELF MAGAZINE last year — I had to pick up a copy of this because a wealth of *my* artwork was in it — there was an article in there about basically how images in comics nowadays are degrading women. They were using pictures of my version of Ghost, **Jim Balent's** version of Catwoman, and a bunch of other stuff from some underground comix, you know. Not to put them down but I didn't recognize the writers or the artists or whatever.

STINE: They weren't that good.

ADAM: I read the article. The article was written by somebody who had their opinions — this is the way I perceive it — their opinions were already formed before they went into a comics shop to do research.

DAK: *That's how most of the major media works, especially news media.*

JULIA: *Sure.*

ADAM: And that's just it! They are going to, you know, be judge, jury and executioner of my chosen profession, comic books — on the basis of a *movie!* My initial gut reaction is: Please, don't rock my boat. If you want to basically be **Oliver Stone** and make a movie that rocks the film world, go ahead and rock

“People not armed with the facts sti

your *own* industry, but don’t come off your big ship and rock my dinghy. I’d rather be controversial on my own. I’d rather do something and have people go, “Whoa, look what this guy did, this bears scrutiny.” Let’s get our tempers flared, let’s yell and talk and sort this out, as opposed to misunderstanding and misconception.

DAK: *If people see Batman and Robin with this subtext of homoeroticism, it could be easy for people to draw the erroneous conclusion that that’s why Johnny is a homosexual, it must be these comics he was reading. I think that hits at the heart of what you said.*

ADAM: That’s exactly what I’m saying. Like I said earlier, I spent the last nine years of my parochial education, whatever you want to call it, in a private Christian school. I went to school with this girl named Faith, and she was a Christian —

DAK: *Good thing.* (Laughter.)

ADAM: Well, there weren’t too many at that school, real ones I mean. It was great, the school was called Life Center Academy, we all called it Life Sentence Academy. *(Laughter.)* We were stuck there with these really godawful uniforms, you know. I had to wear this navy blue polyester three piece suit with a light blue shirt and a red, white and blue tie with flags and ’76s on it. *(Laughter.)*

But, Faith was always a very liberal-minded Christian; she didn’t blindly accept what the church fathers would give her to think, she would always sort it through. I was very dismayed, several years after our graduation — she had had two kids and was trying to raise a nice, Christian family — she gave me a call because she had *heard,* the church fathers had *told* her, that Northstar was gay, that some Marvel Comics superhero character was gay. She said, “What are they going to do *next!* Is Superman going to become a necrophiliac or something?” She had not bothered to read the comic, she had not bothered to go into a shop. Her church fathers had told her that Marvel Comics had a gay superhero, and she thought that *they* — the comic book illuminati — were going to decide that Superman was now going to become a bum chum of Batman. *(Laughter.)*

That really sparked me thinking, because people who are not armed with the facts are still willing to jump to conclusions. That’s what I *fear* about BATMAN FOREVER, you know. I could be incredibly wrong because I’ve only received the slightest of signals, but it’s something that I have become aware of. The discussion we had at the studio, I was very cautious with my wording because one of the guys in on the discussion is a homosexual, and it’s very *easy* to *criticize* something like this and then to be deemed a homophobe, or a racist or a chauvinist or whatever the case may be.

DAK: *Some topics — and more and more topics, it’s almost impossible to talk anymore — but some topics have become so politicized that just to* discuss *them you are automatically labelled. If you say things, like have an opinion against something Israel has done, the automatic conclusion is that you’re anti-semitic.*

ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *You are no longer allowed to even observe an indisputable fact, like this will probably get me hate mail just for saying there are Jews in the world.* (Laughter.) *That’s not even an opinion, it just* is.

ADAM: **George Carlin** has a routine, he talks about how **Richard Pryor** and **Eddie Murphy** can say “nigger” all they want because they’re black guys.

BRIAN: No no no no, because dey niggers.

ADAM: Brian can say that because he’s a black guy.

BRIAN: I’s a nigger. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I really, at home, or back at the studio — which *is* my home, I guess I’m giving more away for the psychoanalyst — I have a big sign which has a parental warning advisory; I’d really like you to put one at the beginning of the interview. *(Laughter.)* I have a hard time expressing opinions because as the politically correct world sees me, I am at the top of the elitist food chain, I am a white American male.

DAK: *The current enemy.*

ADAM: Yeah, I am everything *bad* about the world.

STINE: You are the man. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *You are responsible for every-*

to conclusions. That's what

thing in the world, then.

ADAM: I am boss Charlie, I am the man.

BRIAN: You are round-eyed Joe. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I am descended from a DWEM, Dead White European Male. I am the cause of all the world's woes, I am a snow person. It's tough. It's tough to sit there and voice your opinions about something. You know, I like to think of myself as pretty free thinking, and I've never really given anybody less of a chance or less of an opinion because of race or creed or color or anything.

DAK: *What I always liked about working in comics, nobody in comics gave a damn whether you were male or female or black or yellow or white. If you could do the work you just did it.*

I don't mean to shanghai your interview, but that to me is what's wrong with things now, people are trying to decide issues on false premises. What I'm trying to say is the issue shouldn't be, are there enough black people doing this, or are there enough Hispanic people doing that; that should have nothing to do with it. Are you, in our field, a good storyteller? If you are and if it so happens that 99 out of 100 good storytellers are Chinese, that's not racism, they're just good storytellers! Maybe they have an aptitude for that based upon centuries of whatever the genetic pool was.

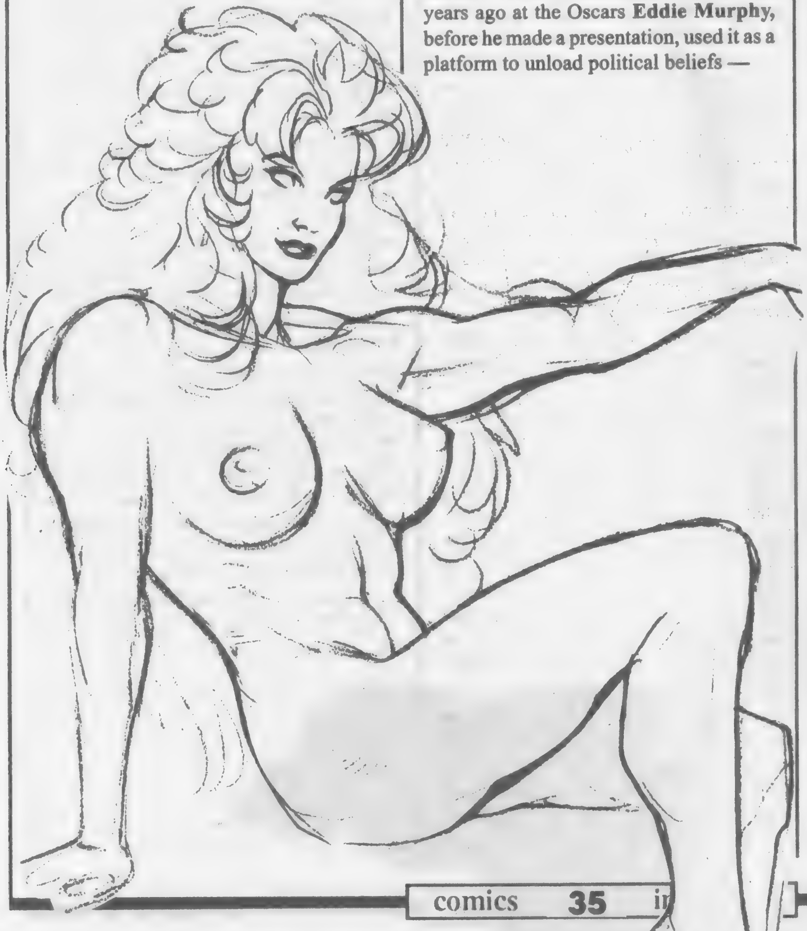
ADAM: Or it's just a happy coincidence.

DAK: *Yeah, or something to do with Chinese culture.*

JULIA: *It's more racist to ask are there enough black people doing this; they stop being individuals —*

DAK: *Individuality is lost entirely, it's just you're judged completely by what color is your coat. That should not have anything to do with anything.*

ADAM: Yeah. I remember a couple of years ago at the Oscars **Eddie Murphy,** before he made a presentation, used it as a platform to unload political beliefs —



DAK: (Sarcasm alert) *That's one of my* favorite *things about the Oscars.* (Laughter.)

ADAM: Eddie Murphy got out there and said we need to have more black people working in Hollywood.

DAK: *I thought that was a sad moment, actually.*

ADAM: I got into a heated discussion with a friend because I said, "I know what he's trying to say, but he said it wrong." He basically wants everybody to be given a fair shake, but by going out and playing the quota of how many African Americans work in the industry, he sent the wrong message.

DAK: *It's exactly wrong. Nobody should, on the basis of what color their coat is, be denied the opportunity; but nobody should be given the opportunity based on the color of their coat, either.*

ADAM: Assholes come in every color. But that's just it, there are so many people who want . . . a redress of grievances, I guess. It's like an eye for an eye. I remember seeing **Denzel Washington** speak during a publicity junket for

“Somel ng to misread some of

MALCOLM X, he said the white man . . . I'd better remember his exact words because misquoting him here would be a mistake. *(Pause.)* He *basically* said the white man had a lot to account for because of what's happened to the black man for the past 400 years. I *personally* don't go for that; you know, suffer the son the sins of the father, that's bullshit.

DAK: *The thing about it is that the fallacy is in the premise. The sins of the fathers, that whole thing; it's people of this color may have done things to people of that color, but I didn't do it to Brian. We're individuals. We are a product of our time, just as our ancestors were of theirs.*

ADAM: Right.

DAK: *If you look back in time . . . in France all the French fought each other, they didn't even recognize each other as French. If you look at the Sioux, I read the journal kept by Lewis and Clark where they wrote down what they were told by the people they encountered, and before the white man came there were something like 23 tribes of Sioux, 20 of them were at war at all times, the Sioux didn't like the Sioux. What I'm saying is I think this is a human thing. If you go back in history you discover everybody lived in small groups and hated everybody else and killed each other, fought over what they thought was a real limited pie.*

At that time the premise was we're superior to them, we've got the "big club" or so on.

ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *But to take those mistakes of the past and apply them to people today, to say we today are responsible for this, it's completely wrong. It's just a fact. We're all here now, let's all grow up. I don't think it does anybody a service to have that group-think thing, because you can always go one step back and find a grievance. Some people really buy into that, have grievances based upon things that never ever happened to them. Or the other side of that is they feel superior based upon attitudes of previous generations, that doesn't apply either. So, they go around carrying these dead people's prejudices and doing all of this stuff.*

JULIA: *It's silly.*

this and all of a sudden we are racists."

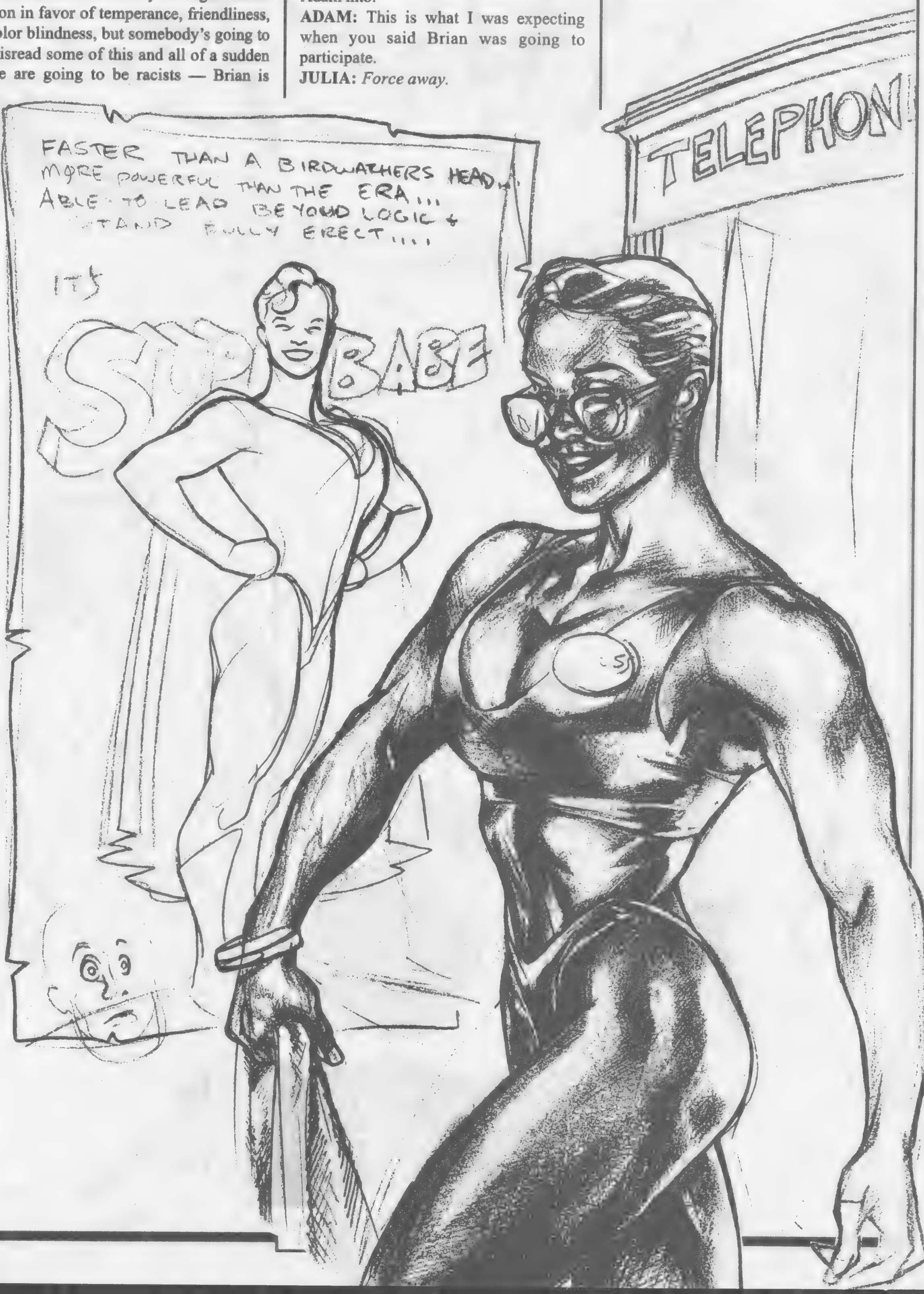
ADAM: The thing — we started this talking about Batman's nipples — *(Laughter.)* And people misunderstanding and misinterpreting. It's really sad to think that we're actually having a discussion in favor of temperance, friendliness, color blindness, but somebody's going to misread some of this and all of a sudden we are going to be racists — Brian is going to be an Uncle Tom for being part of it. It really *pisses* me *off!*

BRIAN: Segueing from that, there's an issue that I'd personally like to force Adam into.

ADAM: This is what I was expecting when you said Brian was going to participate.

JULIA: *Force away.*

BRIAN: There is a screaming *legion* of Adam clones. *(Laughter.)* Guys that are just, like, all *over* you. Guys that are ripping you off. They know who they are,


FASTER THAN A BIRDWATCHERS HEAD...
MORE POWERFUL THAN THE ERA...
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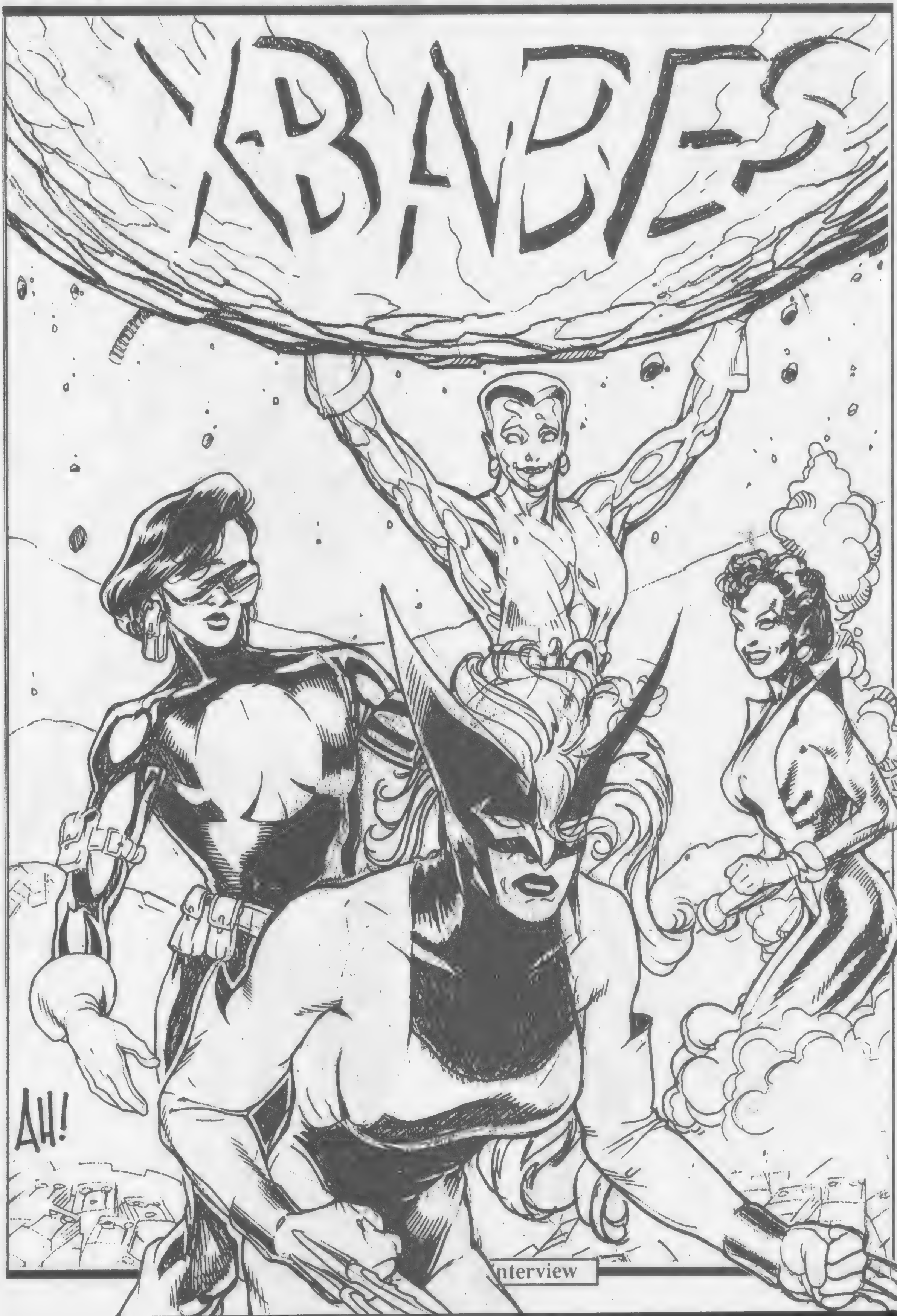
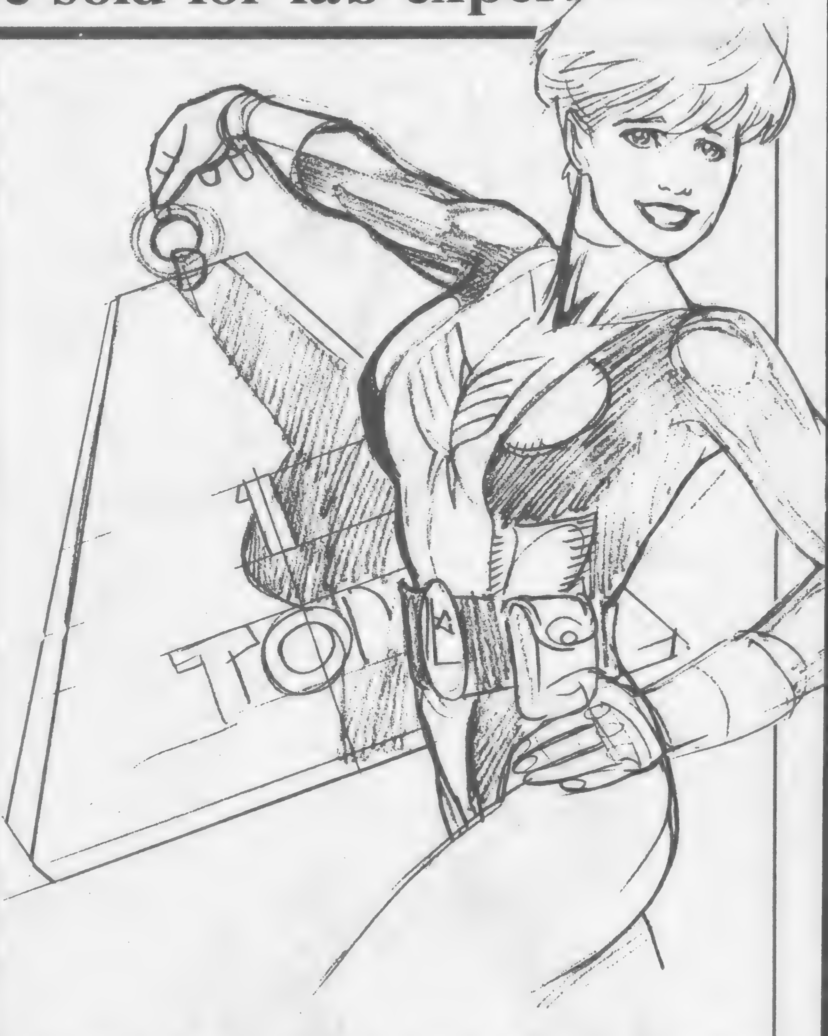
“Guys who’re just *tracing* stuff I’ve done,



they should be sold for lab experi ts”



I'm not going to call them by name; you know who these guys are. It is my personal belief that you are producing some artwork that is absolutely unique, you know, and that's the thing that people get excited about. And *these* guys like your stuff *because* it's unique, and they're basically *mimicking* your stuff. What ends up happening is if you've got cubic zirconia a diamond isn't that impressive. I think these guys are sort of really tearing down your shelf life. What do you feel about this?

ADAM: Well, we've talked about this so many times: I have a different opinion. *(Clears throat.)* I slate them into two categories, the guys who I know are influenced by me, and the guys who are basically just turning on the light table. The guys who are influenced by me, who I've never ever seen them do a direct line-for-line swipe, I don't have as much a problem with. It is a *little* flattering to see somebody likes what you do, is trying to learn from it by doing the same thing. Now, the guys who are basically just chimps, they're just *tracing* stuff that I've done, I think they should be sold for scientific experiments. They're really bad, you know.

Brian's right about the shelf-life thing, especially now in the '90s when a fashion or a fad has come and gone *before* it's even had a chance to basically develop into its own. One year of the '90s was spent with everybody dressing like the '60s, then one year was spent with everybody dressing like the '70s, it's like you had an entire decade retrofitted for one year. Americans now, because of information being so fast, things being in vogue and out of vogue real fast, they want something new a lot sooner than, say, 20 years ago. That's what we mean when we talk about shelf life. And if there are guys who are aping my style, it's basically like there's another job that I won't get down the road somewhere. People will go, “Well, we've seen this **Adam Hughes** thing before.” I like to quote **Frank Miller** on this, where it's like “I am no longer amused.”

BRIAN: I personally don't really see that much of a difference between the guys who are tracing your stuff and the guys who are *looking* at it and trying to figure out how to draw just like it. There's really not that much of a difference. High praise is sort of someone says, “You know, I think doing an **Adam Hughes** spoof on this thing would be kind of funny.” Or doing a **Jack Kirby** spoof on this thing, or a **Rob Liefeld** spoof on this thing. *That* I can accept.

But people are basically building a career *off* of *you*. A lot of the guys, really, when you read interviews and talk with them, they say they just happen to draw like you, they're not trying to ape you. That pisses me off even more. If someone is aping you, drawing just like you, and if they were to say they were ripping off **Adam Hughes**, then everyone in the industry would say —

DAK: *Hey, homage.*

BRIAN: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* Everyone would say, okay, this guy is ripping off **Adam Hughes**, but you would still be at the top of the pile. But them trying to basically *rape* you and say that they are *not*, you know, it's not even giving credit where credit is due. And I know a lot of these guys are probably going to pick up this COMICS INTERVIEW to see if there's some artwork that they haven't seen that they can rip off.

DAK: *So, maybe instead of some of that sketchbook stuff we should just print all the same old stuff.*

ADAM: Maybe we should print other people's artwork.

BRIAN: But think about this: Who are the people that you are influenced by? Top three or four.

ADAM: Top three or four? **Steve Rude.**

BRIAN: Your artwork looks *nothing* like his.

ADAM: Dave Stevens.

BRIAN: Your artwork looks *nothing* like his.

ADAM: And **Drew Struzan.**

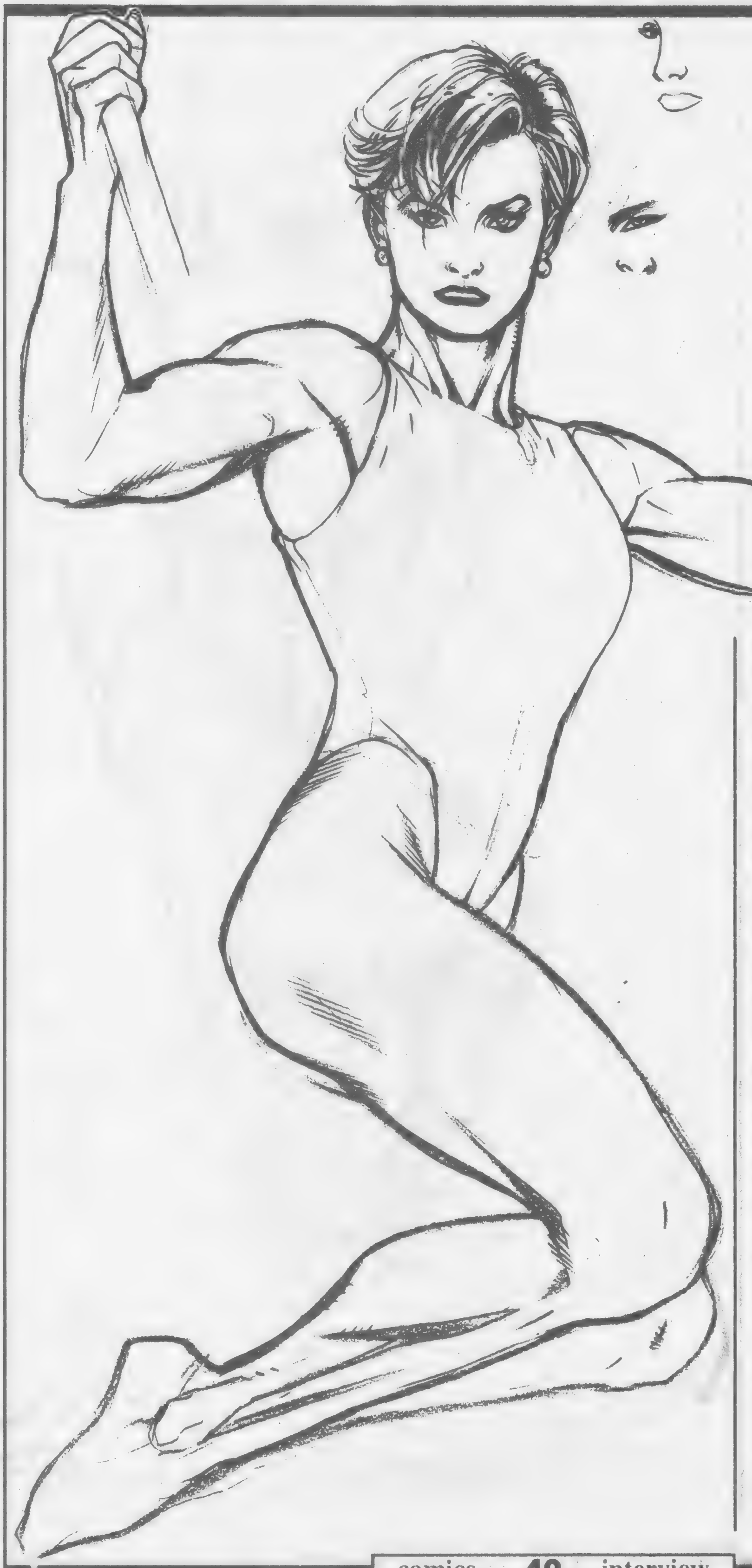
BRIAN: Nothing like *his*.

ADAM: But see —

DAK: *If I were to say whose artwork does Adam Hughes' look the most like, I would say Dave Stevens. Some of the same feeling.*

ADAM: Oh, see, the thing is I'm always willing to call a spade a spade, and I *ink* the way I do nowadays because of **Dave Stevens. Dave Stevens** literally sat me down and said, “Stop inking with pens — ink with brushes.” And I made it my *goal* to be as solid an inker as **Dave Stevens;**

"We need more *individuals* in comics.



so, him sitting there teaching me, master to initiate, I *studied* his work. That's why sometimes I fear pointing the damned finger of fate, you know, because I *still* am learning. I'm still *looking.* I use my eyes at all times, to learn more about the world around me and how to interpret it as art. Anybody who knows anything about art will see a heavy *art nouveau* influence in my GHOST work.

STINE: Yeah.

ADAM: It's like people come up to me and they think they're Sherlock Holmes going, "I see a little **Alphonse Mucha** in your GHOST." I'm kind of like, "You're right." *(Laughter.)* I'm not going to go, "No, I *invented* it myself!"

BRIAN: "I just happen to draw like **Alphonse Mucha,** who is this **Alphonse Mucha** guy?"

ADAM: "Who? Who? I've never heard of this chap." *(Laughter.)* "Someone that draws like *me?* I'd like to meet him."

BRIAN: "Did he do SPIDER-MAN in the '60s?" *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *That would have been a hell of a SPIDER-MAN.*

ADAM: The JoB cigarette Spider-Man. *(Laughter.)* But it's like, you know, I would hate to have . . . I'm the first person in the world to stand up and list all my faults, and I really despise it when people try to give me ones I don't have. One of the ones I *don't* want to have is hypocrite. So, it's really hard for me to take total issue. I mean, Brian lives for controversy. Brian lives to basically kick soapboxes out from under people. *(Laughter.)* It's

Less disciples, initiates, less followers.”

tough for me to have a stance on it, but I do know I look upon it negatively. We need more *individuals* in comics; and less disciples, less initiates, less followers.

BRIAN: But the thing that upsets me the most *about* that sort of stuff — and I'm not going to say that I sort of sprung from the womb fully formed and walking and with a pen in my hand, I was influenced by a *bunch* of people. But, like, in comics there is *such* a *need* to take the easy route. There are some creators . . . like there are some writers who have *killed* themselves coming up with a writing *style;* they've studied **Conan Doyle** and all these different writers; they've really gotten themselves together and forged this clean writing style — then as soon as it becomes popular a bunch of other guys jump on it and do it.

The same thing with *artists.* When **Neal Adams** hit the scene, you know, he blew the *lid* off things. Everyone was like, “Wow, this guy **Adams** is really doing some amazing stuff!” And, really, adding a bit of maturity to the industry as a whole. So a bunch of guys, rather than doing what Neal *did,* develop something themselves, they'll do exactly as Neal *does.*

DAK: *Let's say you really like somebody, your hero — and I've certainly had several of those; I think most people have.*

ADAM: Except for **Karl Story's** sister, Laura.

DAK: *She's either not your hero or she has no heroes?*

ADAM: She has no heroes. She thinks they're bad.

DAK: *Well, that's one attitude. But, the thing is that you tend to want to emulate them, you know what I mean. If a person speaks with great elocution you think, “Yeah, that's how the English language should sound, I wish I sounded like that.” So, in the arts, imitation is how people learn and practice their craft; then after they become proficient they can then maybe see all the things that we're talking about. The point that Brian's trying to make. And then maybe they can skew off. He was talking about Neal Adams: What about Bill Sienkiewicz who started out as a Neal Adams acolyte, emulated his work, and then veered off in another direction?*

ADAM: Oh, man. *(Laughter.)*

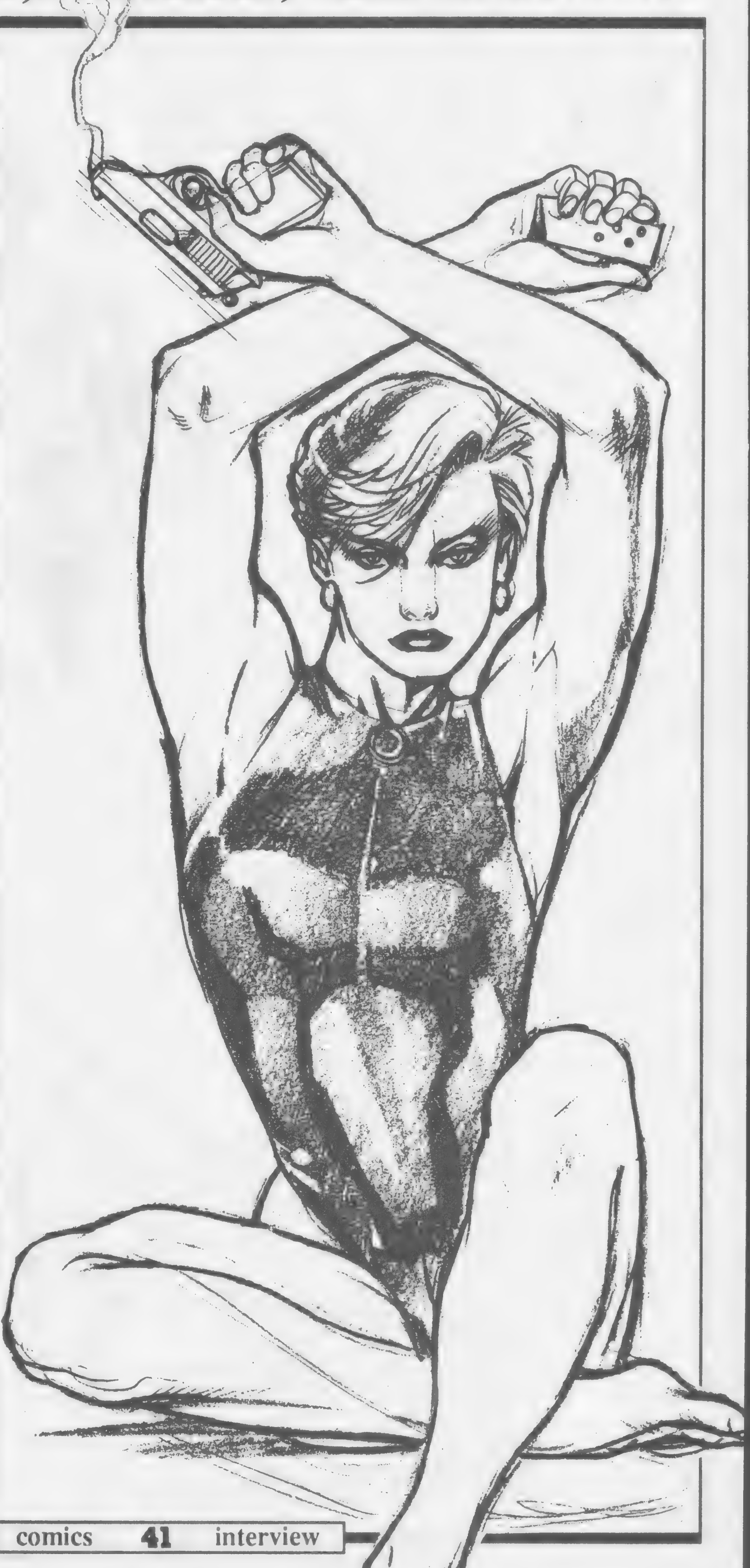
BRIAN: Personally, I hate them *until* they veer off. *(Laughter.)* That's me.

ADAM: Uh . . .

DAK: *But I mean —*

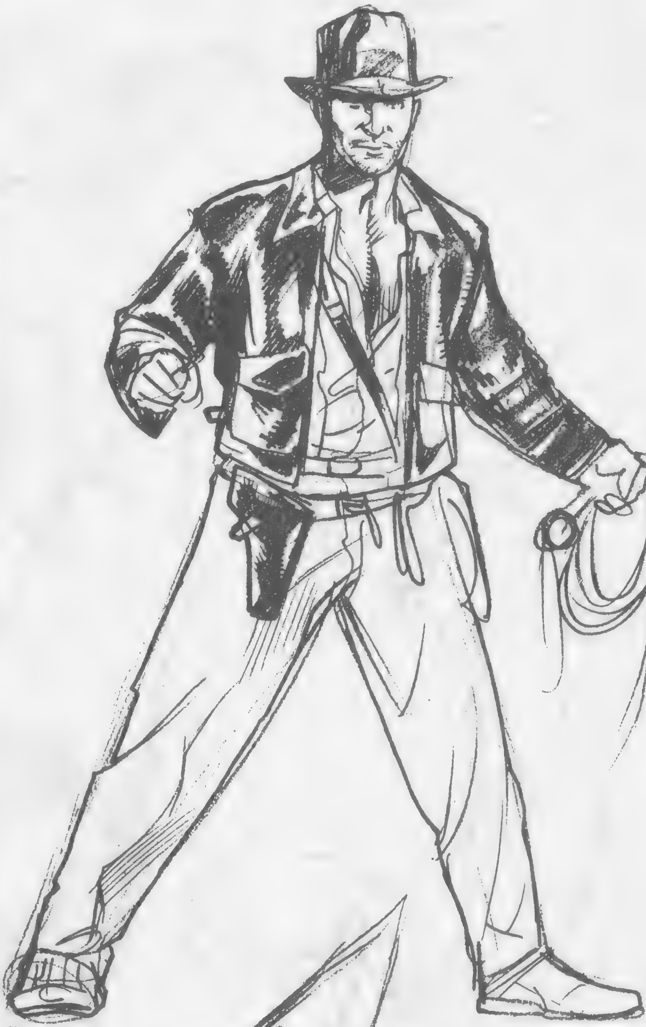
ADAM: I don't —

DAK: *Sometimes —*



"I'm a *bit* old-fashioned. What *I* think

ADAM: — talk about —
DAK: *You —*
ADAM: — Bill. *(Laughter.)*
DAK: *The people who are imitating you must genuinely like what you do, or do you think they're so crass they only do it because you're successful? It's probably because they really admire your work.*
ADAM: I *know* that's why. It's not because they're going, "Wow, look at all the piles of money and women he's got!" *(Laughter.)* Nobody's looking at my lifestyle going, "I want a chunk of that." *(Laughter.)* They're obviously doing it because it appeals to them; and that's the part of me that kind of kicks at the dirt and goes, "Oh, gosh, shucks, that's really swell." And I do agree with you, I do: If you're going to learn to play the guitar you're going to learn a couple of **Eric Clapton** songs before you write your own, before you're good enough to do your own licks and that kind of stuff. And I think that's totally cool! I could show you — in fact I'll *give* you for this article — all my **John Byrne**-esque childhood drawings.
BRIAN: Yeah, but the thing about it is, you know, when you were 15 you weren't trying to sort of get sex with **John Byrne's** penis. *(Laughter.)* I think that's what a lot of these guys are doing — because it's *not* scribbling in their notebooks, they are doing *jobs.* They are *in* the industry, they are *working.* And they are cloning your work. And oftentimes they are getting more sex than you are getting, with your penis. *(Laughter.)*
ADAM: That's Brian's method of metaphor. And it's true. Like, practice in the dark, when you get up on stage don't be a cover band. I do agree. And also, I think a lot of these people who tend to ape other people's styles are sort of really trendy, *fashion*-type people. It's like: This is what's hot right now, I'm going to do what's hot right now so that I can get in.



My personal approach — I remember reading an interview of **Harrison Ford** in VANITY FAIR. They asked him, "How have you remained so popular for so long?" And this is like words that I *live* by for the rest of my life, he goes, "I have never been fashionable, therefore I can never become unfashionable." I thought: That is the *perfect* way for me to live the rest of my artistic career, is like to never sort of kowtow to the whims of what's going on around me in the art world or the comics world. It's just if I do what I *like,* interpret my beliefs and my interests and my enthusiasms through the filter of my particular kind of talent, I'm never going to worry about: Oh, gee, I still work with

is sexy is innuendo, what is suggested.”

pen and paper when everybody’s doing stuff with computers; gosh, I only work in two dimensions. I’m never going to worry about the whims of society or fashion or whatever is hot in comic books right now.

DAK: *Well, I was thinking earlier, relating to our wild diatribe on the sad state of how humanity operates: Do you not fall afoul of that? You’re kind of politically incorrect* by doing *cheesecake in comics, so don’t you sort of fall on the politically incorrect side a lot for doing that?*

ADAM: Yeah, sure, mm-hm. *(Long pause.)* I’m sorry, am I doing something *wrong?*

DAK: *I’m just wondering.*

ADAM: Or have I contradicted myself? I do that, I’ve been told I contradict myself. Have I?

DAK: *No, no. Let me see if I can express myself more clearly: by running* against *the current and doing politically incorrect* things like *cheesecake, it doesn’t look like you worry about being politically incorrect.*

ADAM: No. You see, that’s it, that’s the difference. I *hate* political correctness, for one thing; I think a bunch of bored college students came up with political correctness and *infected* the world with it like the Ebola Zaire virus. *(Laughter.)* But to say, you know, I’m going against the grain of that, that needs clarification. That seems like I’m Lieutenant Dan up on the masthead waving my fist at God, saying, “Just to *spite* all you *fuckers* I’m going to be politically incorrect and draw *cheesecake!”* But I just do it because, for lack of a better term, it pumps my ’nads. *(Laughter.)*

I just go with what basically puts a rosy smile on my face. If it’s politically incorrect now, in ten years it might be socially acceptable, and at that point I won’t give a wet slap, either. If you sit and wonder about whether what you’re doing is socially acceptable, it’s like society changes every five minutes. You have to worry about your *own* convictions, about what *you* think is correct and incorrect.

DAK: *So, what about PENTHOUSE COMIX?* (Laughter.) *According to you, is that okay? I mean, you did go to that Build Your Own Jesus school, couldn’t you be doing all this as a rebellion against that?*

ADAM: Are we going to talk about my Mom now? *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *What about her? Is there something we should know?*

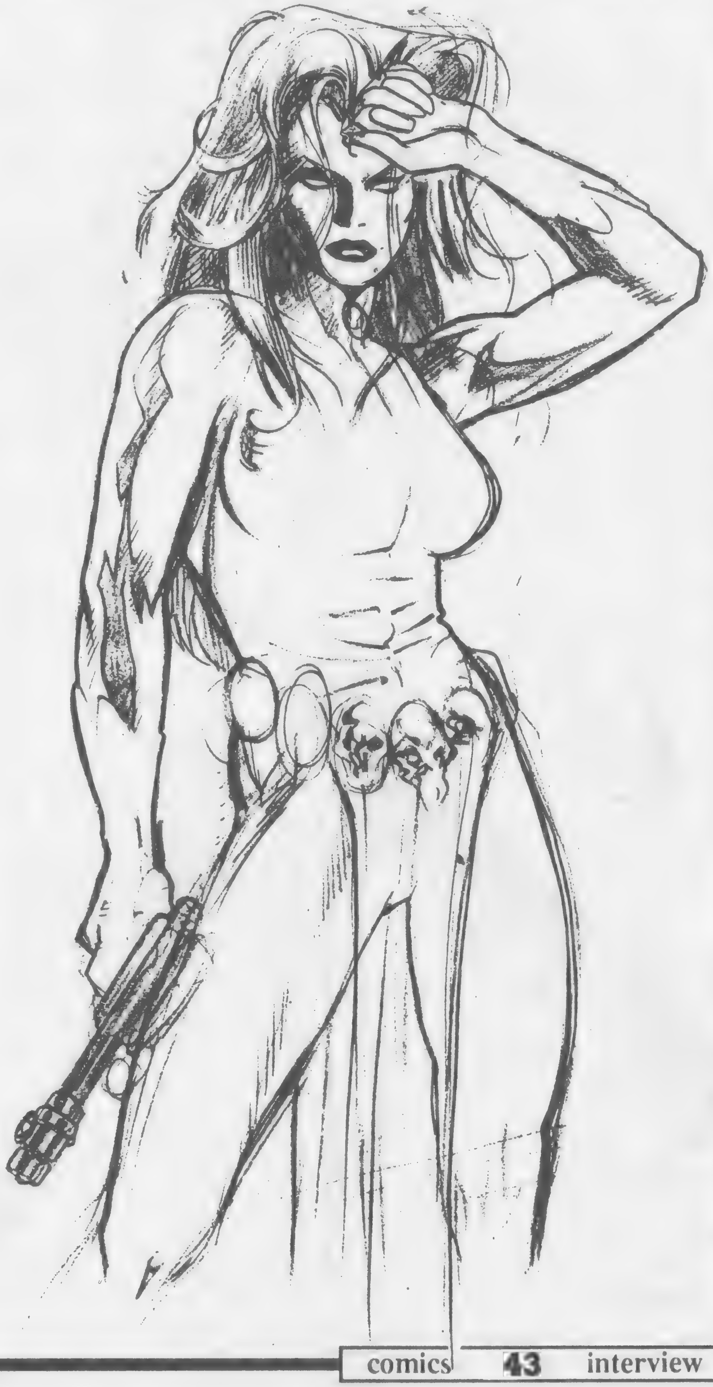
ADAM: I should be on the couch. *(Laughter.)* It’s like, well, PENTHOUSE COMIX, I was young and I needed the money. *(Laughter.)* The PENTHOUSE COMIX thing is one of the only times in my career where basically, against my better judgment, I did something for the money.

DAK: *Did you have fun doing it?*

ADAM: Not most of the time, no. It’s funny, people like to sit there and go, “Boy, **Adam Hughes** really likes to draw sexy babes, I bet he *loves* to draw *naked* sexy babes having *sex* with each other!”

DAK: *That’s what I always thought.* (Laughter.)

ADAM: That is so incredibly wrong. I… I’m a *bit* old fashioned. What *I* think is sexy is more along the lines of what is innuendo, what is suggested: What, if I peel back the layers of the onion one more time, will I see? As opposed to, basically, *plthpt* there it is wide open. *(Laughter.)* It’s like in FULL METAL JACKET, “I want to see fur and early morning dew.”



“If you talk to a woman the first thing on

When it’s there for the world to see it’s just — kind of like . . . it’s just there.

BRIAN: It was some fun, though.

ADAM: There was some fun at the *expense* of the work.

JULIA: *The research was fun.*

ADAM: Well, yeah. *(Laughter.)* All the free PENTHOUSE stuff you can choke on, you know.

JULIA: *As God intended.* (Laughter.)

DAK: *It’s like that FORREST GUMP thing again, but without the candy.* (Laughter.)

ADAM: I am an idiot. Basically, things work out for me in the end, okay. I tell the same stories over and over and over again, and I tell them the exact same way every time, I get them down by rote. Everything I’m saying to you here now Brian has probably heard me say a million times. Maybe we’ll have a discussion about something and by the end of it he will have persuaded me to rethink my wording, basically kind of look at my approach. I’ve picked up a lot of language skills from Brian.

I used to never ever, like, *talk* with people. Specifically *women,* because there’s this big thing where if you try to talk to a woman the first thing on her mind is: You want to have *sex* with me. *(Laughter.)* Like, if you just start a casual conversation. But Brian is the kind of person who will walk up to a woman and say, “You have a heart of gold and nipples of steel.” *(Laughter.)* And she’ll blink a lot, she won’t know what to say. I’ve learned from Brian that there is such a way that you can go up and you can just start talking to anybody, and you can just cut a swath through their perceptions of what they *think* you’re trying to do. *(Pause.)* What were we talking about?

BRIAN: PENTHOUSE COMIX.

DAK: *Yeah.*

JULIA: *You said something about morning dew.* (Laughter.)

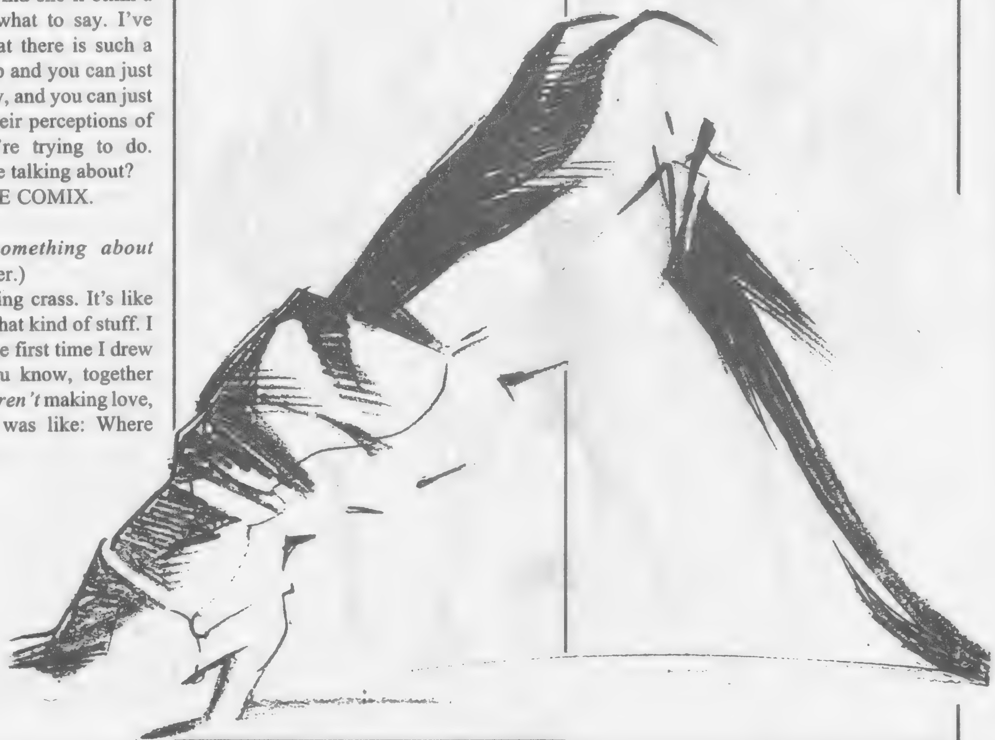
ADAM: It was me being crass. It’s like . . . I *don’t* like doing that kind of stuff. I was really upset that the first time I drew two people naked, you know, together being intimate, they *weren’t* making love, they were *fucking!* I was like: Where have I ended up?

The funny thing, I was talking a few nights ago to a friend of mine, **Craig Jamison,** an aspiring screenwriter I went to school with, and we’re talking about the old homestead, about LCA, that Build Your Own Jesus school. *(Laughter.)* I remember one time I visited him in Philadelphia and we went to this bongo-drum taco place, sort of a beatnik taco house, right, and we’re trying to explain to a friend of his the insanity of this school; the sheer mayhem and lunacy, what a great time we had, because it was not the standard gun-totin’ high school, it was basically a wacky time. Other people in the restaurant stopped what they were doing to listen to us. We told one particular story and from the back of the room we heard, “You’ve got to be fucking kidding.” *(Laughter.)* People were listening and we love talking about this.

I was telling Craig a story that was related to me by my mother, who still lives in New Jersey. She said that she had made friends with a woman who was considering sending her children to this private school out in the country called Life Center Academy, so Mom said, “Oh, my son went there.” And this woman said, “Is your son **Adam Hughes?**” And Mom said yeah, and this woman goes, “Oh, they *mentioned* him.” *(Laughter.)* My Mom said, “What are you talking about?” “Oh, they use him as sort of a recruiting inducement!” *(Laughter.)* Just to give you the size and the scope of this school, I graduated 16th in my class but there were only 17 people in it, okay. In the nine years that I went there I think there were maybe 300 students maximum at a time, it was a very small school — we’re talking kindergarten through 12th grade. And these people are basically saying their curriculum is so good they produce talent like **Adam Hughes.** I was telling this to Craig, and Craig says, “You need to go back for career day with a shirt unbuttoned down to your navel, lots of gold, and slides from PENTHOUSE COMIX.” *(Laughter.)*

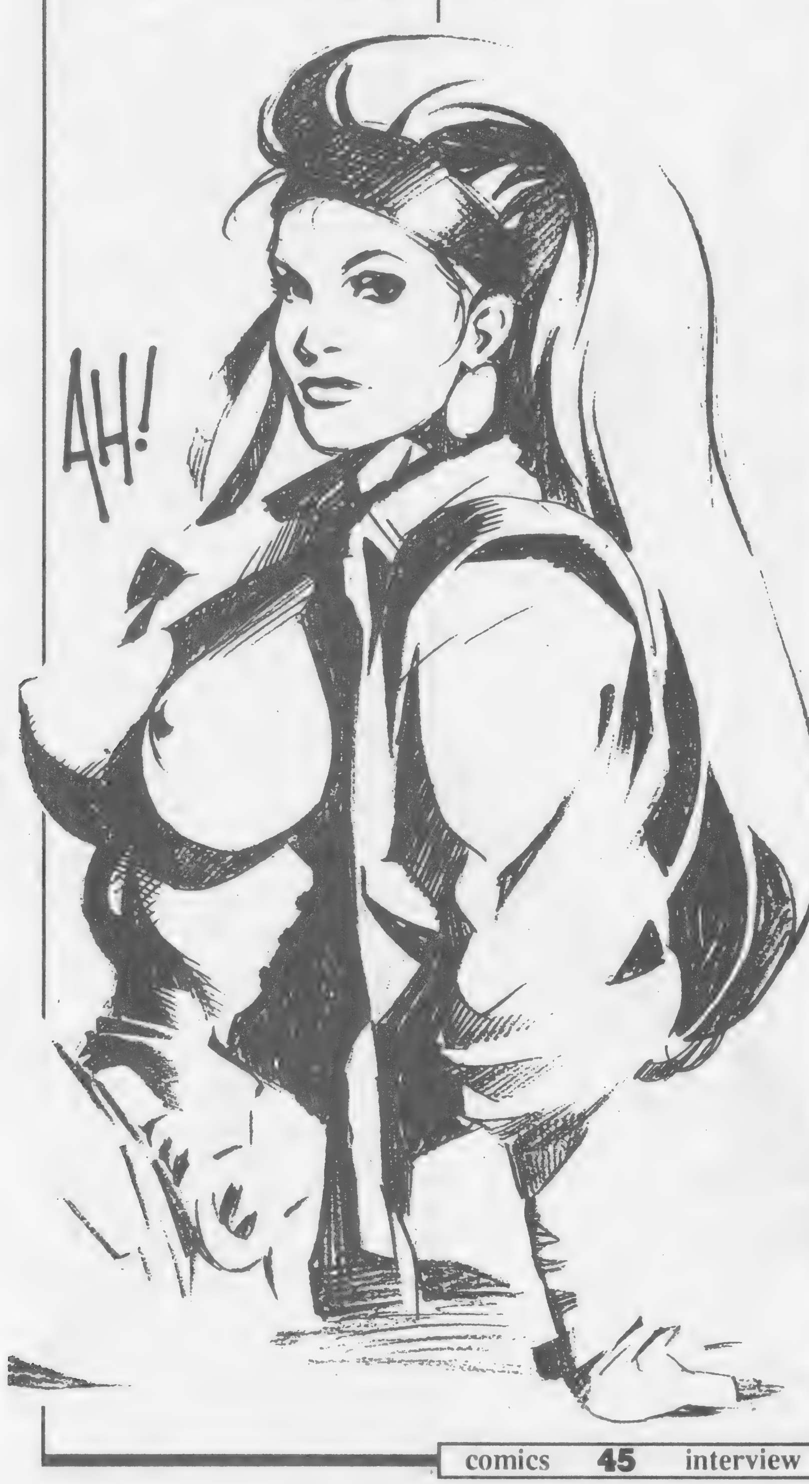
The PENTHOUSE COMIX thing to me was — this’ll probably get me in dutch with the guys, and now that GHOST has fallen through I want to try to get some more work with them, get a little more flush — but to me it was sort of a necessary evil. I love superheroes in comics, I love good girl art in comics, classical and contemporary — but I *don’t* like going over that line. I don’t like showing you the man behind the curtain.

DAK: *Or the man in the boat.* (Laughter.)



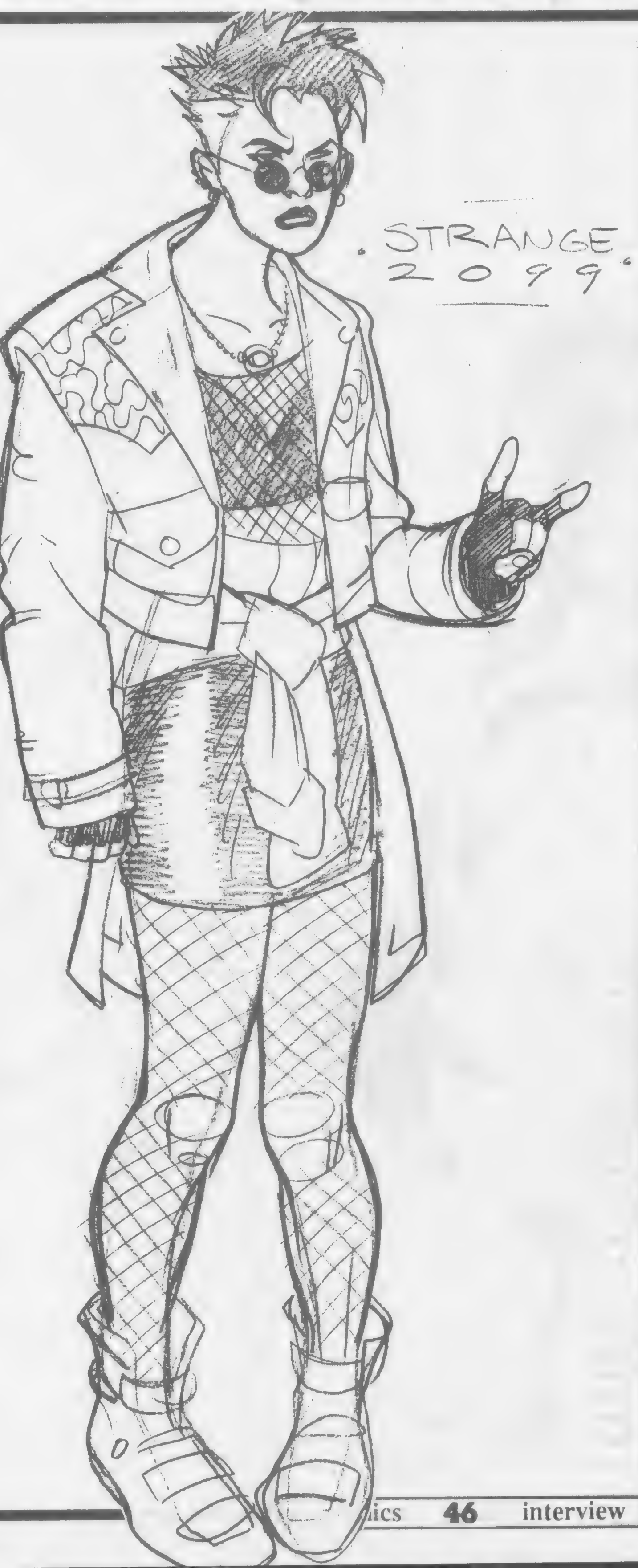
her mind is: You want to have *sex* with me."

ADAM: It's just like in the same way, you know, when you're doing *horror* it's so much better to *imply*.
DAK: *The Lovecraft thing.*
ADAM: Yeah, the **Lovecraft** thing; what lives under the cellar stairs in the shadows, as opposed to all the lights being on so you can see it. I think it's the same way with sexuality, male or female, in comics. When you go in there and you show the raw, guttural, there's no further you could go without an X-ray —
DAK: *There's an idea for a new men's magazine.*



ADAM: *(Groan.)*
BRIAN: We'll actually put cameras inside the uterus! *(Laughter.)* But along that line, because you *are* capable of *drawing* — like, you take a look at the work of someone like **Milo Manara,** who *does* work with sexual content, it's got a sophistication to it.
DAK: *It's damn good.*
JULIA: *And it's very very sensual. It's not just, you know, hard-core porn, it's* really *sensual.*
BRIAN: Yeah. So, do you think that PENTHOUSE COMIX in a way is *missing* a potential?
ADAM: I think so. It's treating a lot of its material as satire and farce, you know, and it's . . . I *agree* with you, I sometimes lament the fact that I don't have the sensibility to temper it, or the impetus to be a **Manara** or a **Moebius** or a **Saudelli** or all these guys who are capable of *eroticism* in comics. It's an artform! And I just felt so bad that what *I* was doing, I felt, was just smut. It was basically two superheroes screwing in the clouds and all of a sudden a sperm shower rains on New York. Is it funny, does it further the story, is it cute, is it romantic? I don't know, okay.
DAK: *Or even is it erotic?*
ADAM: It was like it just was. I don't know where I'll be in 10 or 20 years — maybe that'll be my cup of tea and that's what I'll want to do, but at this point right now I am not entirely thrilled with doing this — the *prospect* of what I was doing.
BRIAN: So, going back into it — because right now we're both in kind of the same boat, and it's good to look at the road you have to walk before taking a stride down it — we're going to be doing some stuff for PENTHOUSE COMIX, and I'm thinking: Okay, I've got the script, but *how* can I approach this? Almost in a sense applying that same thing that you would apply to doing GHOST or doing X-MEN or doing anything, how can you treat this material, what is the thing that you can do to this material to really give it the something that it needs?
ADAM: Yeah. It's tough because —
JULIA: Et tu, *Brian —?*
BRIAN: Oh, all of the guys at the studio are going to be doing PENTHOUSE COMIX, a sort of jam.
ADAM: A Gaijin issue to fund the move.
BRIAN: Yeah.
ADAM: The jam, the jam — I'm like anybody else and I've got my good work and my bad work; I try to make it *all* good but a lot of the times the inspiration just isn't there. It's like I'll take the job

“GHOST is my best story work to date. *My*



because it sounds like it'll be fun, then when the time comes to actually do the job there's just nothing there, it's a blind date that didn't work out. I think GHOST is my best story work to date because, like you said, I was a Jaguar firing on all twelve.

BRIAN: Something else — I don't know if it's something you've actually thought about — out of all of the stories that you've done, everything that you've done has been very light, like the JUSTICE LEAGUE stuff was very light. But the one JUSTICE LEAGUE story that I thought was your best was that one Despero story, that was pretty heavy. I thought, really, that was your best stuff, because it really showed what you are capable of doing. I *can't* do comedy so I don't even try — you do, but you have the ability to slip off into that heavy range. The GHOST stuff is *very* heavy, there is *nothing* funny about the GHOST stuff, I think your work really *shines* on that. Have you ever thought about the fact that maybe when you take it seriously — and I don't mean serious in terms of quality, I mean serious in terms of story — you can put more into it?

ADAM: That is a completely new notion to me. I've always thought of myself as a real light sort of **John Ritter** of comics, just kind of like: Put a smile on people's faces, that's all you need to do. But looking back at the body of work that I've done, the *best* stuff always *has* been the stuff that leaned heavily on drama.

JULIA: *So, you think you would like to get into more heavyweight stuff?*

ADAM: This is the first time I've thought of it. Now that I've got an eight-year career behind me, I can look back and assess it, like, gee, I guess I was a little more *inspired* with the dramatic stuff. I guess I did push myself to the next plateau, the next level, when I had some work that had some — not that it's splitting the atom or anything like that — but something that had a little more emotional weight to it than just a sort of **Benny Hill** kind of joke. That would be cool.

Well, it's funny, the Blanc Noir stuff — people are going to read this interview and try to come up with a, you know, “Oh, this is what **Adam Hughes** really is like; you see, what he's saying here, this is the kind of mind that says this kind of stuff.” I think people will see our Blanc Noir stuff and they're going to say, “Okay, this is where this guy's brain is, this is where that guy's brain is.” I mean, when people see **Jason Pearson's** BODY BAGS they will fear the dawn. *(Laughter.)* When

book INVERTIGO's got a *theme* to it."

they see **Cully Hamner's** BRAVE they'll start to understand really what — you know, the character is what you are in the dark — they'll understand what Cully's like in the dark.

BRIAN: Yeah. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: When they see Brian's MAXIMUM VELOCITY they'll realize what a weird alien enigma walks among us. *(Laughter.)* It's like *my* book INVERTIGO, when I look at it — now that we've actually brought this up and we're talking about it — when I look at INVERTIGO, it's a pretty heavy book. I hope that it will be highly entertaining, but it's got a *theme* to it, and hopefully at the end it will have a moral resolution. And I think: Wow, what Brian said, not only is this going to be hopefully my best work — because it's creator owned, I get to own it and I get to have copyright and trademark **Adam Hughes** on it, it's *mine!* MUHAHAHAHAHAHA — *(Laughter.)* But if drama is innately where I do my best work, the story I came up with *is* an innately melodramatic story to begin with.

As the story stands right now — I thought of the beginning and the end. Okay, I know where I'm starting and I know where I'm ending, I just need to have something interesting happen along the way. So far all of the things I've thought up along the way are the *themes* that I'm going to explore, I don't have the *scenes* yet. I don't have the concrete, you know, what words I'm going to use to convey these things. Everything that I've thought up so far has been motivation, theme and moral, not dialogue, scene and setting. I don't know what that means.

DAK: *It means there's something there, I would think.*

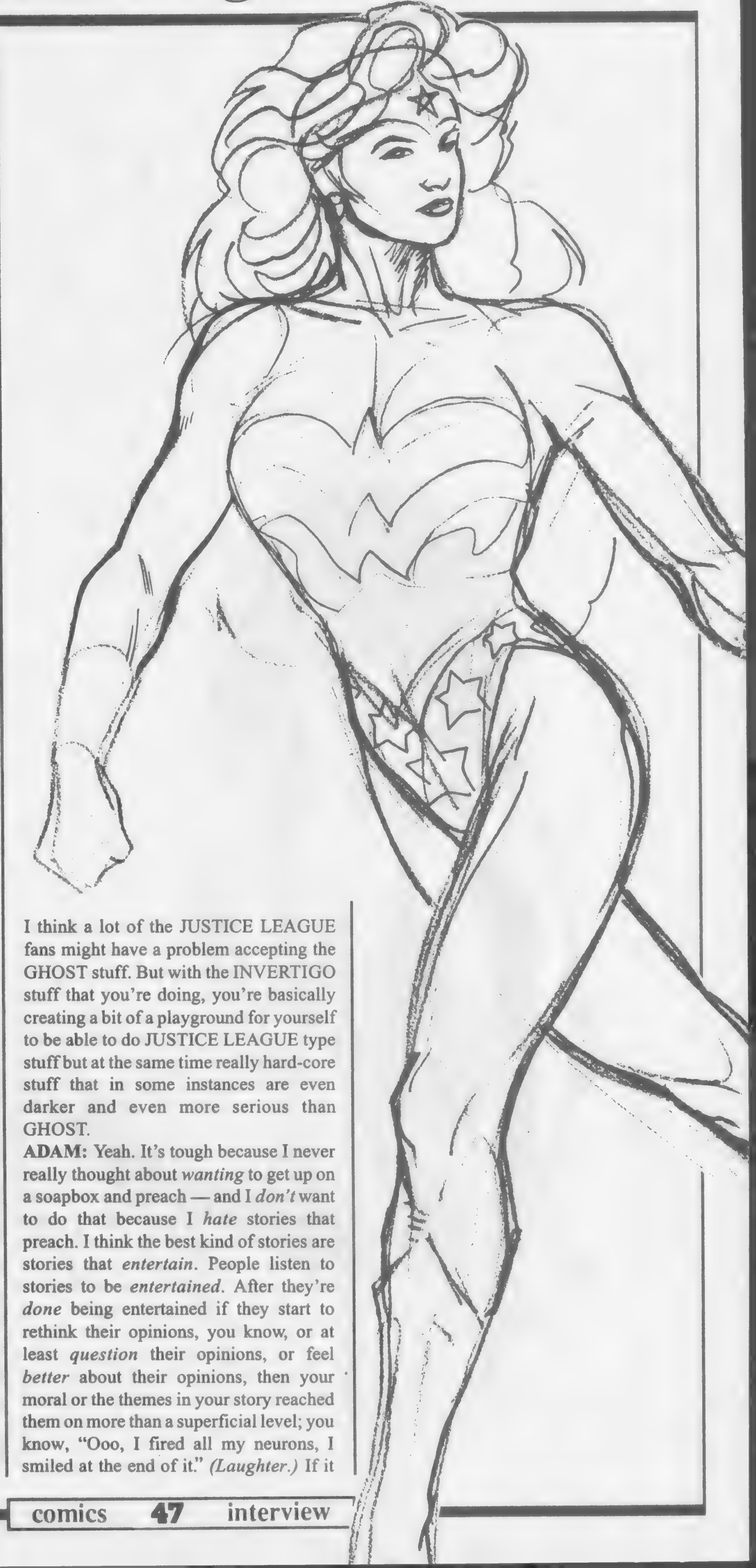
BRIAN: Yeah.

DAK: *I would say that's what's missing from most comics.*

BRIAN: There's an odd dichotomy between, like, the stuff that you do, the stuff that's *expected* of you, and the character that you have created. The two sides of the character that you have created, in a sense does *almost* directly reflect the two sides of the work that you do, and the work that you are *capable* of doing. There is the super commercial superhero-ey "Wow, this looks neat" sort of side, but at the same time there is that sort of undercurrent of seriousness; there's that undercurrent of grunge, that hard edge that happens with the character at the same time. I think you've actually for the first time given yourself a format.

You know, with the GHOST stuff, that's real serious stuff and I think it's great, but I think a lot of the JUSTICE LEAGUE fans might have a problem accepting the GHOST stuff. But with the INVERTIGO stuff that you're doing, you're basically creating a bit of a playground for yourself to be able to do JUSTICE LEAGUE type stuff but at the same time really hard-core stuff that in some instances are even darker and even more serious than GHOST.

ADAM: Yeah. It's tough because I never really thought about *wanting* to get up on a soapbox and preach — and I *don't* want to do that because I *hate* stories that preach. I think the best kind of stories are stories that *entertain*. People listen to stories to be *entertained*. After they're *done* being entertained if they start to rethink their opinions, you know, or at least *question* their opinions, or feel *better* about their opinions, then your moral or the themes in your story reached them on more than a superficial level; you know, "Ooo, I fired all my neurons, I smiled at the end of it." *(Laughter.)* If it



“You know, I don’t drink, don’t smoke, but

actually got you to go: Hm, how do I really feel about nuclear war? — well, that’s cool. But you don’t feel that you’ve just sat through a two hour sermon.

JULIA: *CAPTAIN PLANET AND THE PLANETEERS, oh please.*

DAK: *She was gagging — she saw an episode.*

JULIA: *I couldn’t watch, I had to shut it off. It was boring.*

DAK: *As far as politically correct crap goes — we can solve problems by working together, we don’t need mindless violence, stay tuned for wrestling.* (Laughter.) *Which, of course, is what kids really want to see anyway; who are they kidding? I wanted to ask you, when you’re drawing all these great Adam Hughes girls, how do you come by some of this? Do you use models? Do you use photo reference?*

ADAM: *(Barkingly.)* Never! *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Have you got anatomy in your mind in such a way that you can simply just draw it right there on the page?*

ADAM: I would say it’s yes to both questions. I grew up with the standard fear of reference that every kid grows up with; you know, the derisive index fingers of your classmates going, “You didn’t draw that, you *copied* it.” But, the whole *purpose* of visual communication is using your eyes to observe the world around you, then reinterpret it through your talent buffer, basically rethink it and then represent it to the world around you. I always used to *fear* reference because I thought I wouldn’t be a real artist if I did it, and that it would become a crutch and I would not be able to draw without it.

The STAR TREK graphic novel really turned my head around. When you’re doing STAR TREK *everything* is referenced. When you’re drawing a spaceship it’s reference, on the inside or the outside it’s reference. When you’re drawing Captain Kirk, his uniform is reference, his toupee is reference — everything is —

DAK: *He wears a toupee?* (Laughter.)

ADAM: And wrestling is fake, DAK.

DAK: *Damn!* (Laughter.)

ADAM: But on that I *tried* using straight reference a couple of times and I failed miserably. I would look at a picture of Captain Kirk, try to draw it, and it would look really static and dull. But then I discovered the *best* way for *me* to use it was to draw what I want, basically lay out the page the way I want, and *then* grab a picture of Captain Kirk and correct the eyes, and then grab another picture and correct the mouth, and then grab another picture and correct the chins, and that kind of stuff. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Was that plural? Was that one chin in one panel or a chin in several panels?*

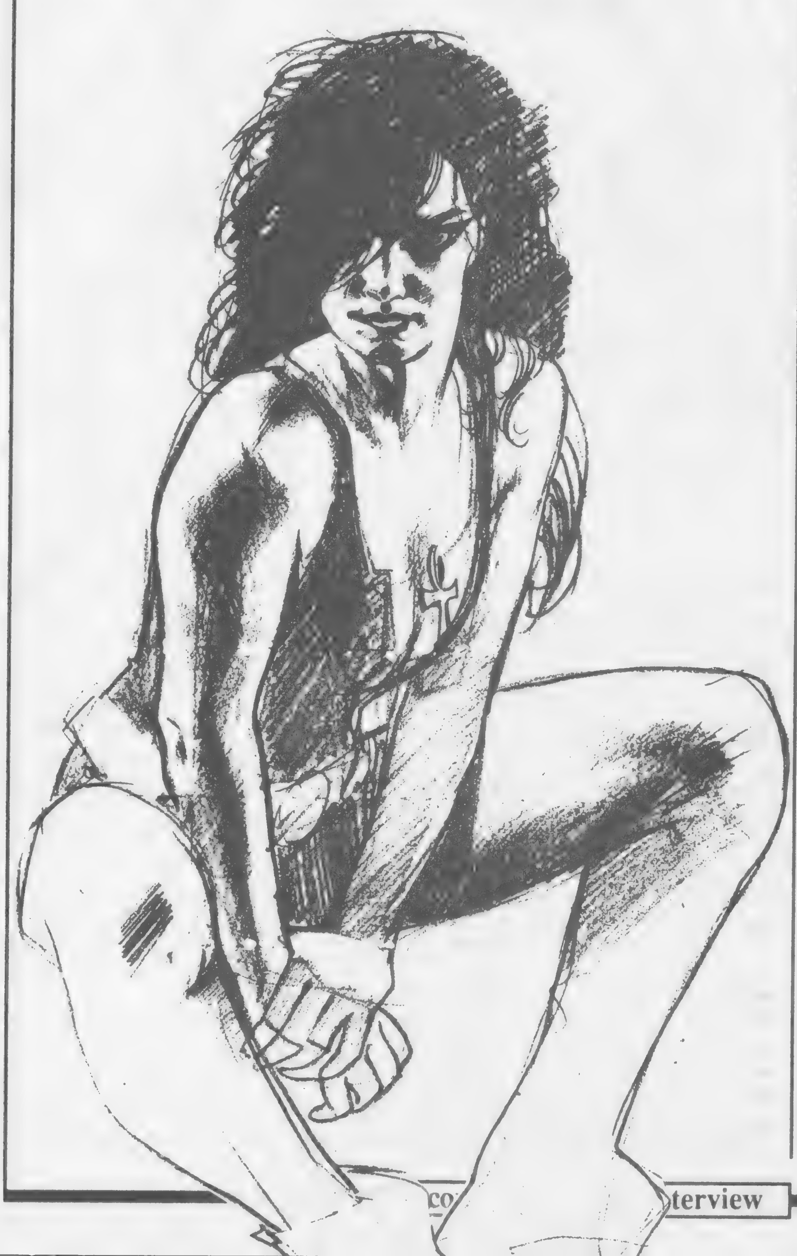
ADAM: That will be an exercise for the alert reader. *(Laughter.)* I discovered that I would retain the natural dynamic of a freehand illustration, but using the reference to fix up Captain Kirk and his uniform and his spaceship was quality control. It made the work a little bit better. So, I’ve learned to not fear it. I actually use it as a tool the same way I would use a pencil or an ink brush.

DAK: *But did you have models for, you know, those great girl shots and stuff?*

JULIA: *PENTHOUSE girls?*

DAK: *Well, hey —*

ADAM: The PENTHOUSE COMIX stuff was drawn so much in the eleventh hour there wasn’t time for me to look at anything *but* the page. There’s very little reference that helped me through the PENTHOUSE stuff. But a lot of the times, like when I’m doing a pinup kind of shot, I’ll sit with my sketchbook and I’ll draw what I want. Then I’ll go, “Hm, you know, pretty weak with the feet.” Say this is a shot of a sexy babe wearing a bathing suit, so I’ll go through some magazines or some books. You know, I don’t drink, I don’t smoke, but I am addicted to periodicals and magazines and books. I’ve got a library that needs sorting, you know. But



co terview

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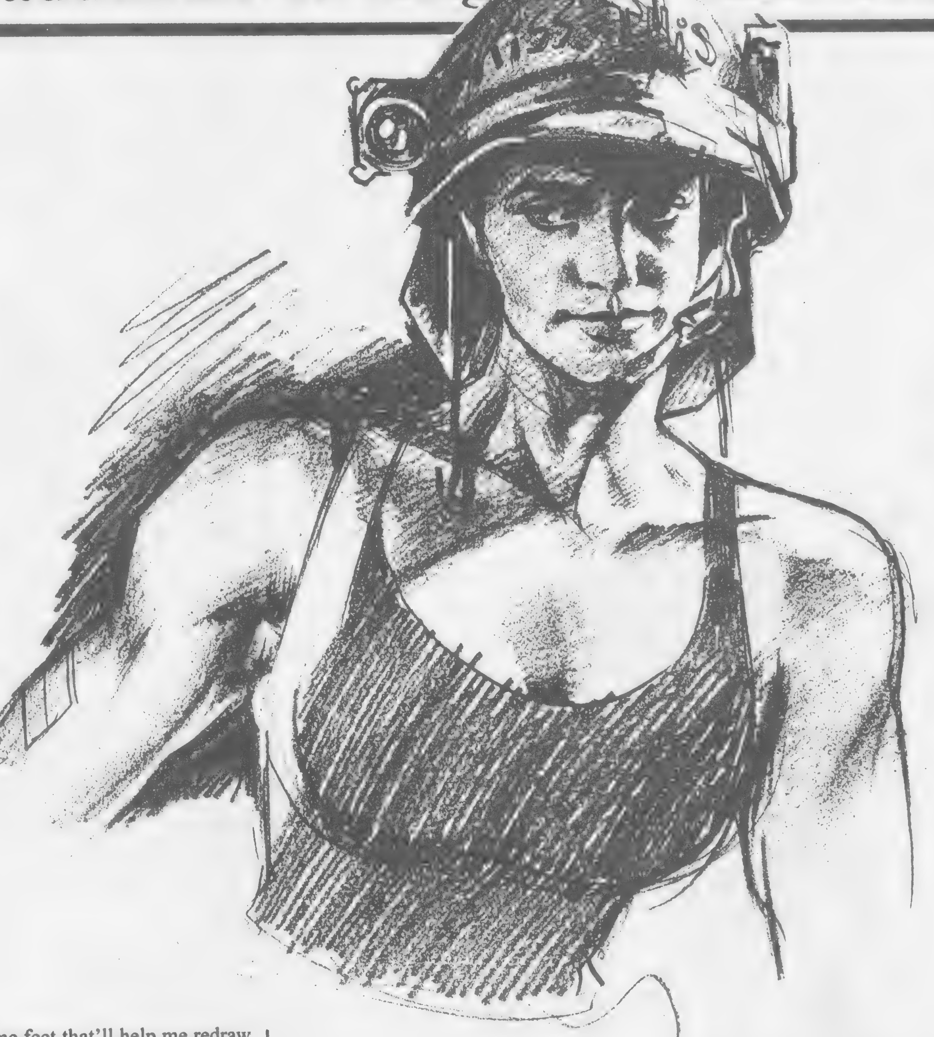
I’m addicted to maga and books.”



I’ll find some feet that’ll help me redraw those feet.

There have been a few occasions where I’ll see a pose or something and think it’ll make a great idea for a pinup, and I’ll go ahead and use that; but a lot of times when I do that it’ll end up for me personally it looks a little static. I’ve been learning a lot about photography and stuff because I’m learning to paint from Brian, okay, and I can’t fudge that. I’ve learned for me the healthiest way to use it is to retain what is *me* about my artwork; but using the reference I can improve it, make that hair look a little more real, make the folds in the fabric a little more correct, make the tree in the background a *real* tree as opposed to a *fake* tree that I sort of invented out of the top of my head. I hope that’s an answer.

DAK: *Yeah, I think it is. This painting thing, you got into that rather neatly.*

ADAM: I’m the king of segues. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *You said — before we had the tape on, while we were sloughing around Screamer Mountain — you said that you were getting into painting, that line art wasn’t the only thing.*

ADAM: I’m nodding. *(Laughter.)* I’m sitting here nodding, the tape can’t tell that unless I’m rattling.

DAK: *Are we going to be seeing more painting?*

ADAM: I would like to. It’s not because I’m dissatisfied or unhappy with pen and ink work; in fact, Stine and I were talking about this the other day. Being a painter, or a color illustrator or whatever you want to call it, makes you a better draw-er . . . make that “person who draws.” *(Laughter.)* And vice versa. Somebody who can’t draw is going to have a hard time being a painter, I think. In my opinion, and I could be wrong, but I think that one *accentuates* the other. I’ve seen, with Brian and with Stine, how good drawing skills make their paintings better. And the fact that they’re painters makes them good paintings, too; there is like a balance between the two.

It opens doors that normally you wouldn’t see from that one vantage point. I’ve learned more about pen-and-ink artwork from the paintings that I’ve done under Brian’s tutelage, you know. It’s kind of like I’ve started to rethink light and color and form and texture and composition, because I’m starting to look at it through a different viewfinder than I would as just a sort of graphic abstract pen-and-ink illustrator.

JULIA: *Do you want to paint more because when you do pen and ink and it goes off to a colorist you just don’t like what they’ve done?*

ADAM: Well —

JULIA: *Or do you not visualize it in color in your mind?*

ADAM: I *think* about it in color. I think that you get some really cheesy comic books when you just draw it and you don’t worry about, like, lighting and ambiance.

"I haven't been royally sodomized yet with

I *always* think in color when I draw, no matter *what* it is. Well, if I'm drawing a black-and-white illustration I'm thinking in value and in tone, or at the very least trying to. But at heart I'm a single illustrator. Drawing a comic book to me is more of a chore than doing a cover or a painting, and not because it takes longer. It's like you put about the same amount of time on a cover that you put into a page, but for me it's more draining to tell a story than it is to basically do a single image.

BRIAN: Yeah. Every once in awhile I step into the sequential art field, but when I'm doing a cover illustration I'm basically just making a presentation, just taking something and trying to make it *look* its best. When I'm doing a comic-book page everything is a system of solving problems, everything is a problem that has to be overcome, and you don't have the last problem overcome until the page is finished. When you're doing a painting you solve all the problems *first,* then you just have fun painting.

STINE: *(Nods.)*

BRIAN: But I wanted to ask you, now that you've been painting and a lot of your paintings have been incredibly successful, do you feel that it gives you a different range of expression?

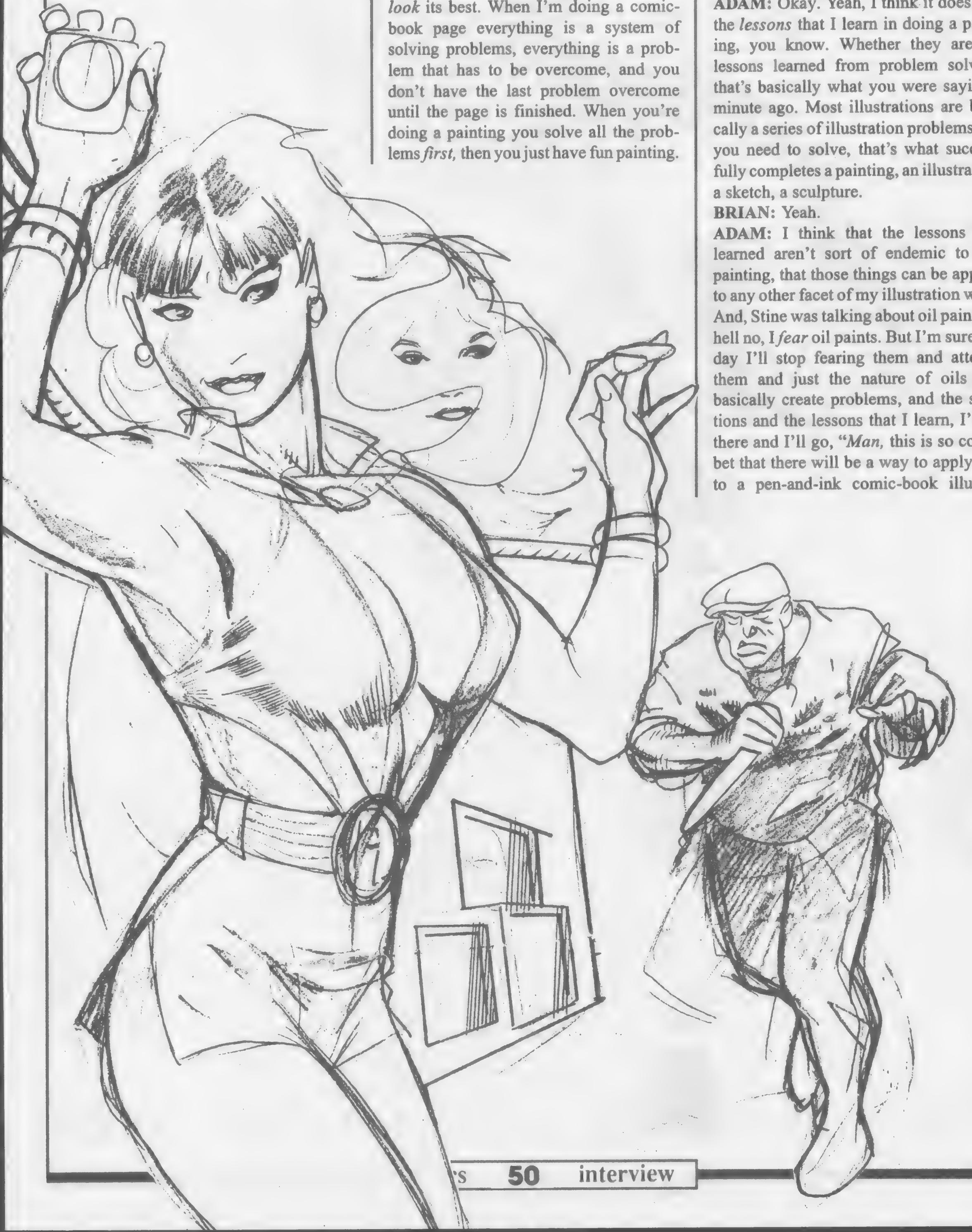
ADAM: A different range of *artistic* expression?

BRIAN: Yeah.

ADAM: Okay. Yeah, I think it does. It's the *lessons* that I learn in doing a painting, you know. Whether they are the lessons learned from problem solving, that's basically what you were saying a minute ago. Most illustrations are basically a series of illustration problems that you need to solve, that's what successfully completes a painting, an illustration, a sketch, a sculpture.

BRIAN: Yeah.

ADAM: I think that the lessons I've learned aren't sort of endemic to just painting, that those things can be applied to any other facet of my illustration work. And, Stine was talking about oil painting; hell no, I *fear* oil paints. But I'm sure one day I'll stop fearing them and attempt them and just the nature of oils will basically create problems, and the solutions and the lessons that I learn, I'll sit there and I'll go, "*Man,* this is so cool, I bet that there will be a way to apply that to a pen-and-ink comic-book illustra-



ink. I've been abused. *(Laughter.)*"

tion." To me it's all related, they're all like cousins. They all have their own unique eccentricities, but they all have things in common, and a solution to one can be just translated into a similar solution somewhere else.

JULIA: *It's like a generic wisdom.*

ADAM: Exactly, exactly. And also I just plain have fun doing a painting even though I am at the stage right now where I'm doing everything wrong. *(Laughter.)* I'll spend way too much time on one. I have *years* of drawing experience which I'm sure I can apply to it; I have a short amount of time of color, color theory, application and technique — and it's tough because in my mind I can see what I want, I have a very concrete image, but my hands don't know what to do yet. I know what I want but I don't know the equation to get me there, it can be kind of frustrating.

JULIA: *When you're working do you do your pencilling for yourself very very tight and then come back with your ink over the top, or do you just like noodle it out and go right in with the brush? Or do you generally have an inker work over the top of it, and if so have you ever had — every penciller we've ever talked to has had the bad inker horror story?*

ADAM: I haven't been royally sodomized yet with ink. I've been abused. *(Laughter.)* A couple times. But, when I'm drawing something *I'll* ink it's fairly loose, because I will do a lot of the drawing with the brush. There's a lot of things that I will do with a brush that I wouldn't do with a pencil. When I'm pencilling for somebody else to ink, for **Karl Story** or **Mark Farmer** or one of my favorite inkers to go in and do, I'm trying to fake with a pencil the brush strokes I want them to give me. I'm not one of those obliging kind of pencillers who goes, "Ah, let the inker do what he wants." I know that's harsh and terrible but hey, it's my page. It's *my* page. You knew the job was dangerous when you took it. *(Laughter.)*

It's like I'm trying to fake line weight and feathering and brush strokes; a lot of the little organic things that for me only a brush can do, I'm trying to do it with this hard graphite tip, and it's so frustrating. My degree of tightness in my pencils depends on who's inking it.

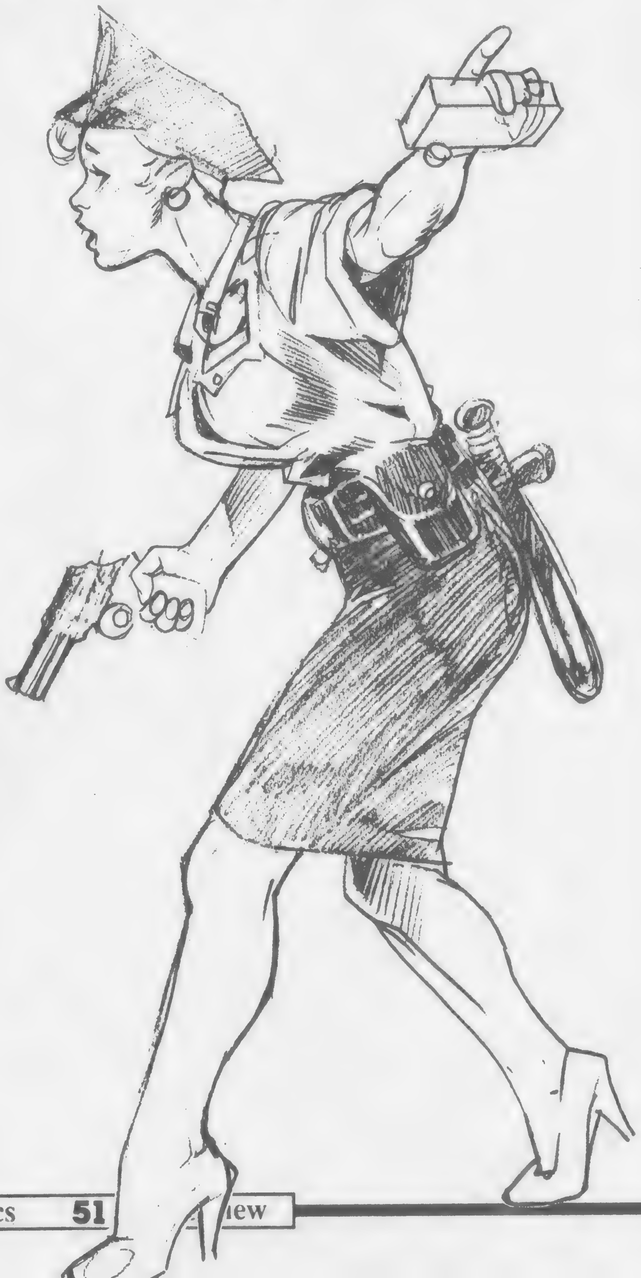
BRIAN: I've seen a lot of your pencil work, and I've seen a lot of stuff that's been inked for you, and I know you're the sort of penciller who *before* you start pencilling the job generally you're going to know who's inking the job. Do you find yourself pitching as a penciller — like **Karl Story** has a very clean, very mechanical line, whereas **Mark Farmer** has a very *clean* line but it's not as mechanical as Karl's —

ADAM: It's more organic.

BRIAN: Yeah, Karl's is machined whereas Mark's is grown. Do you find that you pencil *for* a certain inker?

ADAM: All the time, all the time. I would never pencil a job not knowing who was going to ink it *because,* like I said, I pencil very tight. I pencil for a particular inking tool to go over that pencil line and deliver a particular effect. For me, because I love facial expressions, if you vary the line weight on an eyelash it *changes* the facial expression. Maybe *you* can't see it but I can and it drives me berserk. If I know **Karl Story's** going to be inking a job for me then I know there are certain kinds of lines that I can put down that Karl's good at, and I know that there are certain kind of lines that basically Karl *shouldn't* be inking. It's the same way with Mark. It's the same way with **Karl Kesel** or **Joe Rubinstein.**

You know, that's not an insult; that's not to say that these guys aren't talented, but every artist has his own unique thing. On the opposite end of the food chain, I'm sure there are certain writers out there who would basically say, "I've just written this story, **Adam Hughes** would be the worst guy in the world to draw this



“Brian draws cubes and

because this story appeals to none of his strengths and all of his weaknesses.” And I don’t have a problem with that.

JULIA: *You probably would not enjoy the project anyway.*

ADAM: Right. Like, I wouldn’t want to go up to a guy who inks completely with a crow quill and give him a job that basically just, you know, needs a brush. Never make a fish swim out of his water.

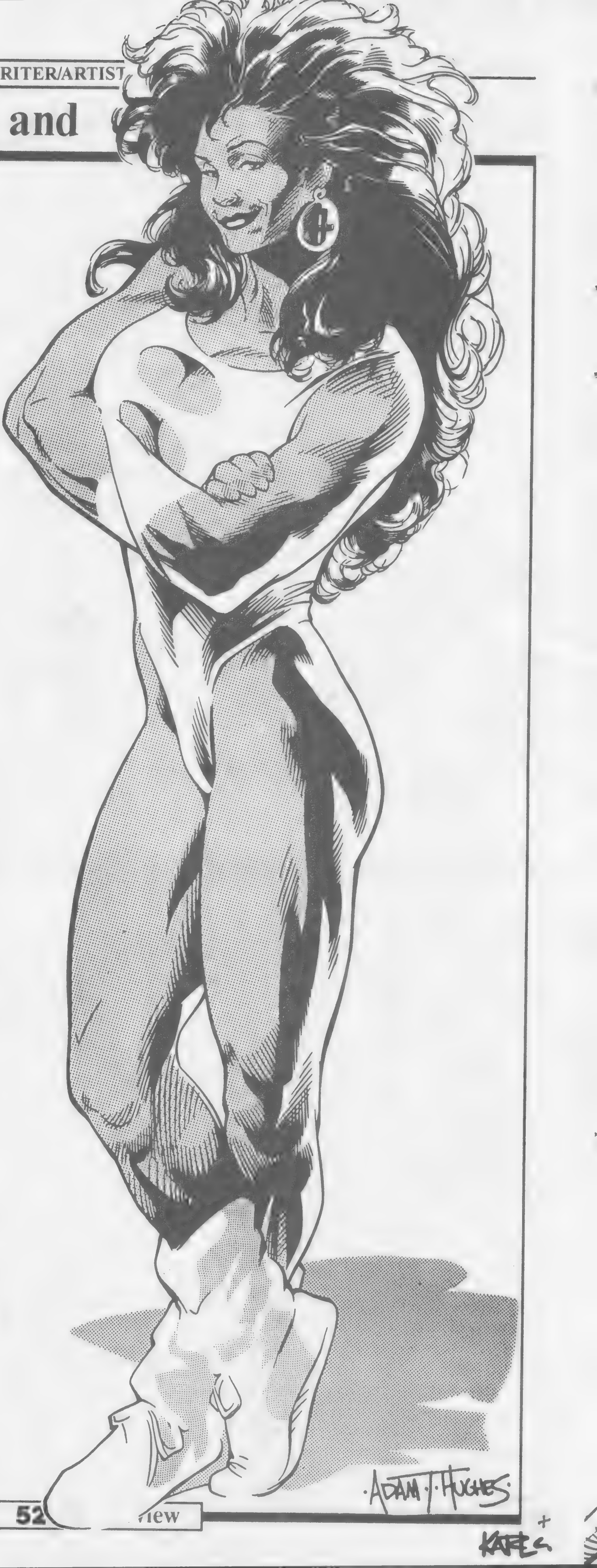
BRIAN: I’ve noticed — and I think you do it also — with me, I can ink but I can’t ink with near the level that **Karl Story** can, and a lot of times if I know he’s inking the stuff that I’m working on I’ll ask him for lines that I can’t do. You know, that I can’t ink. And I’ve noticed you will a lot of times do that with hair, you’ll give Karl hair to ink that you wouldn’t dare ink yourself.

ADAM: No, no, never. That’s funny, you talk about hair, hair is like one of the *banes* of my artistic life. I will spend the same amount of time on a woman’s hair that I will spend on the rest of her body — I mean, you know, on an illustration. *(Laughter.)* I think there are a couple of hair deals in comics, guys that just basically draw hair; like they’re **Botticelli,** they’re just going to town on hair.

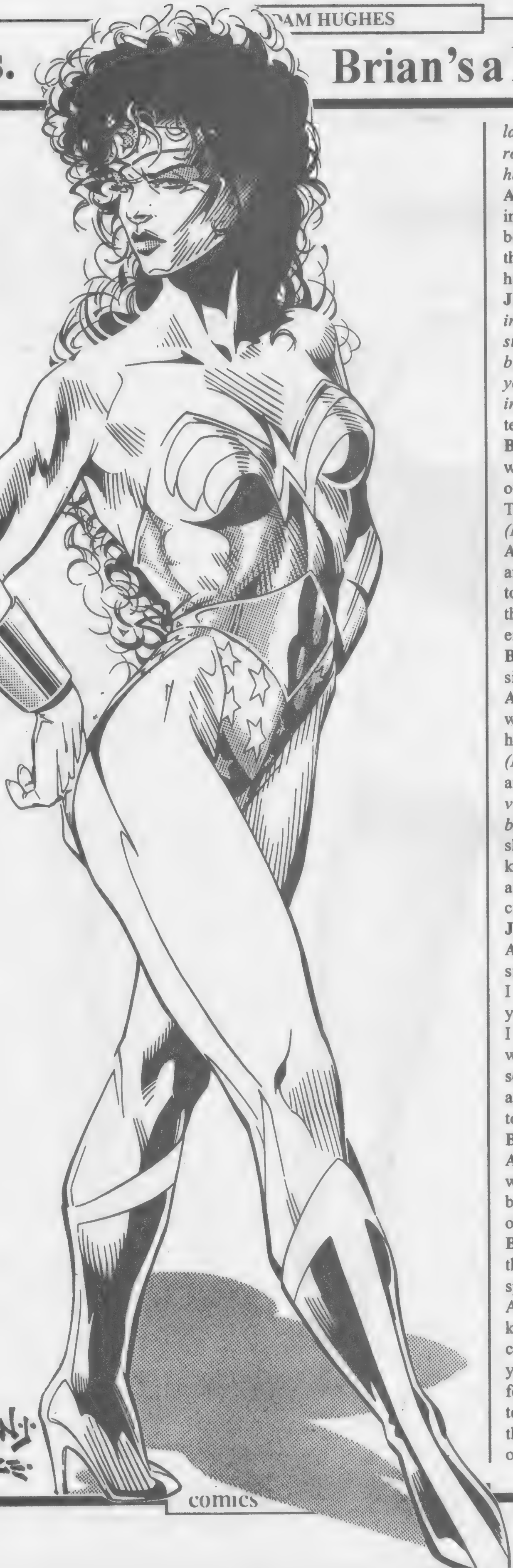
JULIA: *Dan Barry said there is nothing more sexy, in any of the female characters, than just their hair. He said the hair should* move *almost off the page, and that is what to him portrays sexuality more than anything else.*

BRIAN: When I first got into the comics industry, Dan was one of those guys at the crossroads and sort of pointed me in the right direction, so I’ll always worship at his altar. But, like, *hair* for me is one of those things that, *especially* with the female form — and this is where Adam and I are going to start duking it out — hair is one of those things that I think is something really incredible, but it can take on a life of its own. Any time I draw a female character I will get rid of the hair; I will cut it off, I will pull it back, I will put it up under a hat, I will put it up on her head in some sort of bun. I will just totally get rid of it because, you know, I think Dan is right in that the hair becomes something so sensual and so sexy that you’re romancing the hair and not romancing the woman who is wearing it. A lot of times I will go out of my way to *hide* the hair.

JULIA: *Because you’re totally hard and stark and naked, and he’s very soft and round and cuddly.* (Laughter.) *There’s a* difference *there, I mean what you draw is that way. What you draw, Brian, is angular, hard, harsh, muscu-*



’ I spheres. Brian’s a PC, I’m a Mac.”



lar; what you draw, Adam, is curvy and round and soft: and that's why his have hair and yours don't, Brian. (Laughter.)

ADAM: What's kind of funny, though, is in the three years that Brian and I have been working in the same studio, it's like there's been genetic imprinting. Brian has drawn some busty babes, you know.

JULIA: *That's one thing I wanted to get into, because Brian was telling me a story about how he got one job and it had big boobs and he just could not do it, so you gave him a week of time just teaching him how to draw big boobs.* (Laughter.) *Is that right?*

BRIAN: Any time I have to draw a woman with a pair I always kind of slink over to Adam's desk and, "Am I gettin' it? Tell me, Ben Kenobi, am I gettin' it?" *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: You know, it's funny, but Brian and I are as far — in the studio if you were to do a sort of evolution of man drawing, the Gaijin evolution of man, I'm at one end and Brian's at the other.

BRIAN: We are literally on opposite sides of the studio.

ADAM: It's like, Brian's a thin black guy who wears a lot of light colors, I'm a heavy white guy who wears all black. *(Laughter.)* I draw *der zoftig fräuleins* and Brian draws *joost harsh und angular vimmen. (Laughter.)* But I think it's *because* of that that we're talking about sharing the same little office, because we know that in *spite* of all those differences, and despite the fact that Brian draws cubes and I draw spheres, it's like . . .

JULIA: *There's a rapport there.*

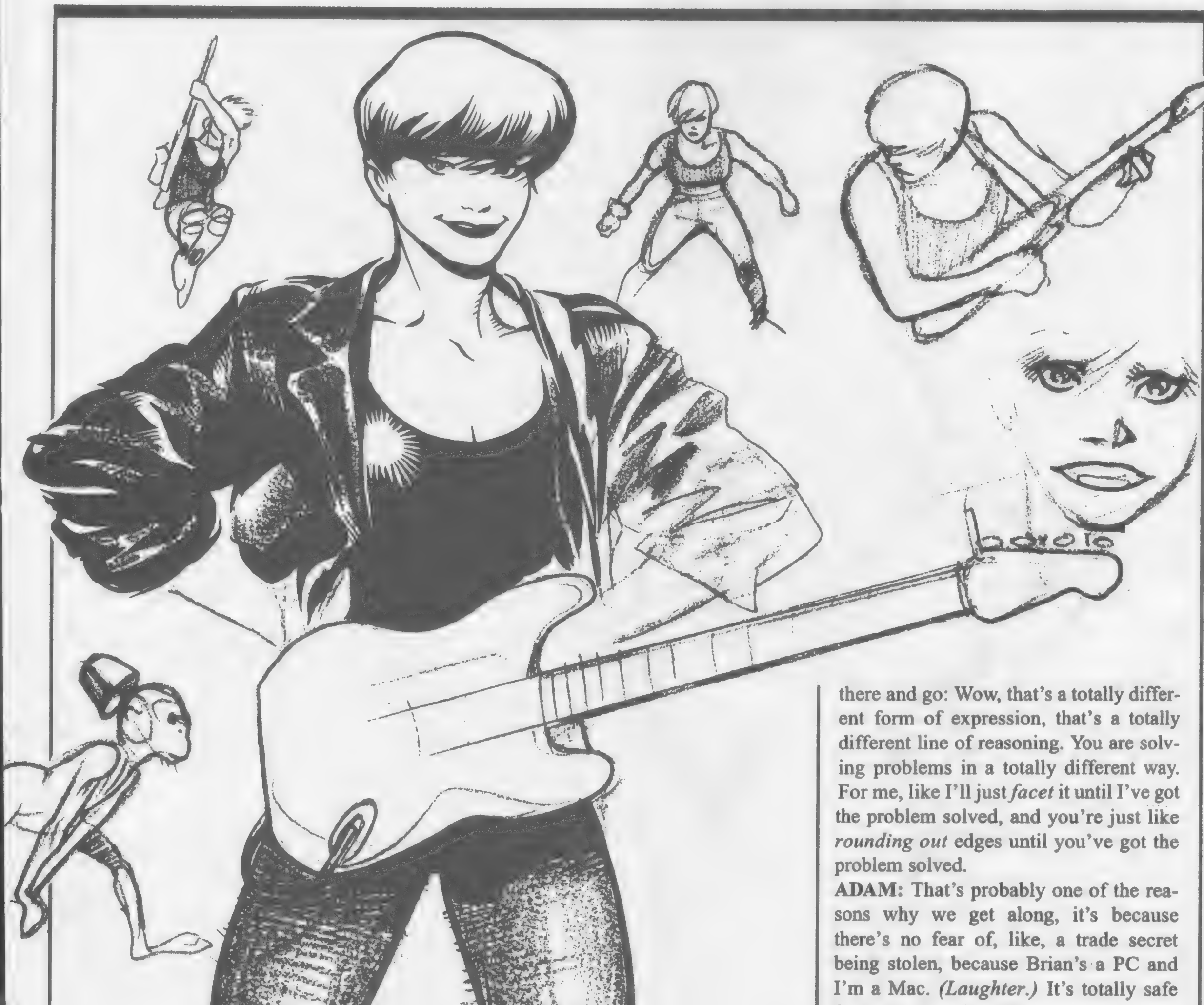
ADAM: Yeah, there's, like, that "opposites attract" cliche. But the funny thing is I really like seeing the little things that you're not aware of. The little things that I do that I've obviously gotten from Brian without even *thinking* about it, and then sometimes I look at something he's doing and see he's done something he didn't do too much in his work before.

BRIAN: Yeah.

ADAM: It's not a matter of ego or whatever, it's just three years with somebody you're going to rub off on each other.

BRIAN: Yeah. But what's really cool is I think there's kind of a neat mutual respect. Although I will try my best to drag Adam over to my side of thinking, you know, there's no *way* that he's going to come over. There's no way that I can get you over. Every once in awhile I'll sort of feel a chain around my leg, Adam trying to drag *me* over to his side of thinking, but there's no way that I'm going to cross over. But I can see. I can kind of look over

“I love it when me and Brian get to draw



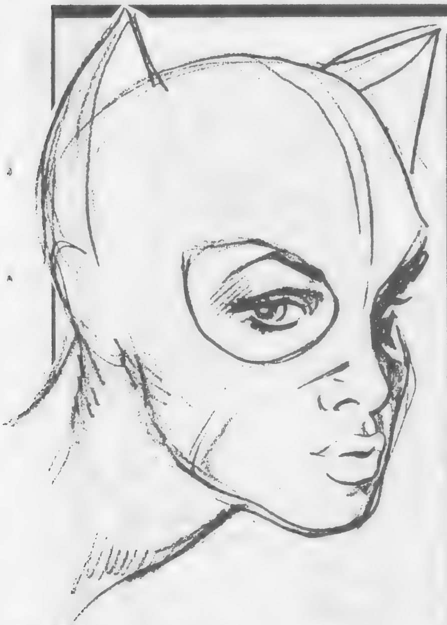
there and go: Wow, that's a totally different form of expression, that's a totally different line of reasoning. You are solving problems in a totally different way. For me, like I'll just *facet* it until I've got the problem solved, and you're just like *rounding out* edges until you've got the problem solved.

ADAM: That's probably one of the reasons why we get along, it's because there's no fear of, like, a trade secret being stolen, because Brian's a PC and I'm a Mac. *(Laughter.)* It's totally safe for us to share ideas because our executions are so polar.

BRIAN: Yeah. What's really weird is I'm getting kind of an education on the whole thing. I've taught a lot of people how to paint and usually it's like I'll say, “You paint like this.” They'll say, “Like this?” And I'll say, “Yeah.” And they'll go, “Okay, good, for the rest of my life I shall paint like this.” Usually what I'm trying to do is just show them kind of the concept then move on. When I'm teaching Adam how to paint I'll say, “Well, you do this.” And he'll say, “You mean this?” And I'm like, “No, that's . . . that's kind of cool.” *(Laughter.)* Sort of really catch myself, thinking it's totally different from something that I would do, but it's got a really neat look to it. Teaching you how to paint is the first time that I'm teaching someone something and *already,* as soon as it goes in, it's morphed into something else, it's just completely different.

DAK: *For example, that cover that you did of Lady Rawhide, it would be hard to*

the same character at different times.”



see Brian’s influence in that. I would never look at that and think, “I’ll bet Brian gave Adam a few tips.” (Laughter.)

BRIAN: It’s really weird because you mentioned LADY RAWHIDE; now, you might not have seen my influence on Adam’s LADY RAWHIDE cover, but I *promise* you you *will* see Adam’s influence on *my* LADY RAWHIDE cover — or should I say Adam’s influences. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: It’s so fun, I love it when me and Brian get to draw the same character at different times. Just because of our takes, there are just certain characters . . . it’s like I feel like I’m married to Vampirella but I let Brian date her once in awhile. *(Laughter.)* Brian owns Catwoman but he lets me take her for a drive sometimes. That’s the only time that anyone’s ever — that DC poster that I was talking about, you remember we were up in Sharon’s office that time I wigged out at the woman for complaining about Catwoman’s waist.

BRIAN: Sharon Kattuah of the Klingon High Command. *(Laughter.)* She’s really a very nice, beautiful person.

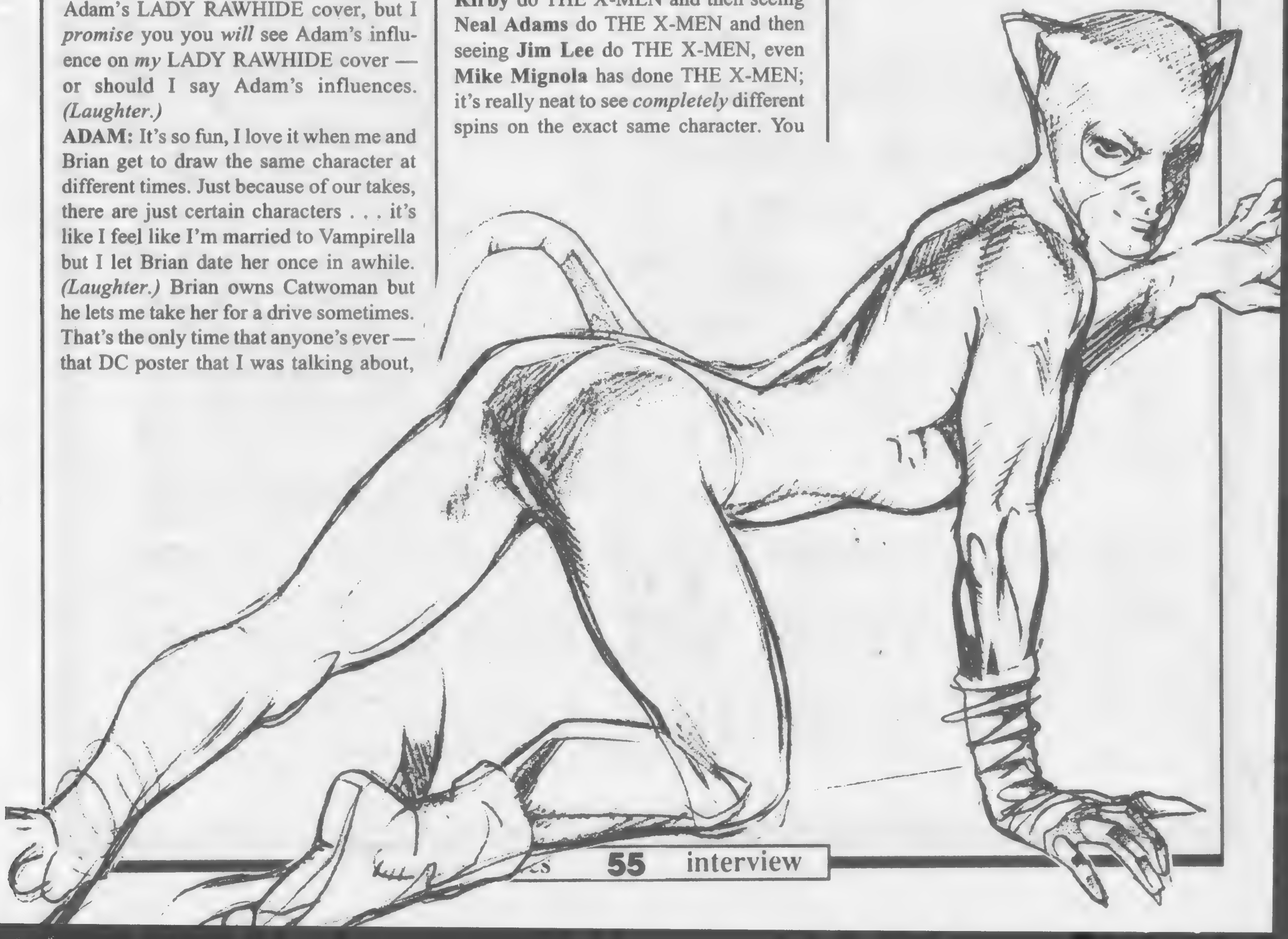
ADAM: Sharon Kattuah was like, “That Catwoman, did Brian help you with that?” I’m sitting there, like you could *hear* the sound of sizzling *bacon*. I was just, “I didn’t need help!” *(Laughter.)* But that’s because Brian just came up with the best way of drawing Catwoman. Like, we talked earlier about you look at a character or you look at a script and you think about what’s the best way to do the job; well, if somebody else came up with the best way of doing it then trying to do something different just for the sake of doing something different is an exercise in futility. I look at Brian’s Catwoman, there’s no other way of doing it, so basically I have to pay silent *homage* to Brian’s *(teeth clenched emphasis)* Catwoman! *(Laughter.)* She’s always got her teeth out, you know.

BRIAN: It is kind of really cool to — I mean, for me being *in* the comic-book industry, it’s one of the few industries that you really get a chance to *see* this, as far as artists are concerned. Seeing **Jack Kirby** do THE X-MEN and then seeing **Neal Adams** do THE X-MEN and then seeing **Jim Lee** do THE X-MEN, even **Mike Mignola** has done THE X-MEN; it’s really neat to see *completely* different spins on the exact same character. You can actually see the different artistic interpretations. And it’s nice to take a look at a character, like even the Iceman character of THE X-MEN, and seeing how all of these different guys have treated this character. It’s odd, like you could see the path of thinking, you can see one guy saying he’s going to blow this and this and this up, and another guy saying he’s going to really pay attention to this effect.

When you’re in the studio, the fun thing about being in the studio with Adam and Jason and all the other guys, of course like every illustration studio or comic-book shop we sit around and do the: Okay, who would win the fight between Jesus Christ and Wolverine?

SEAN TEBOR: No contest. *(Laughter.)*

BRIAN: It’s always cool to hear someone else’s thinking. My line of thinking is *completely* different from Adam’s line of thinking, and just about all the other guys sort of line up between us as far as like concepts of characters and stuff like that. It’s really neat to have your own spin, like this is how I think this character is perfect, and then see what someone else does with the character and kind of go, “Wow, that’s cool.”



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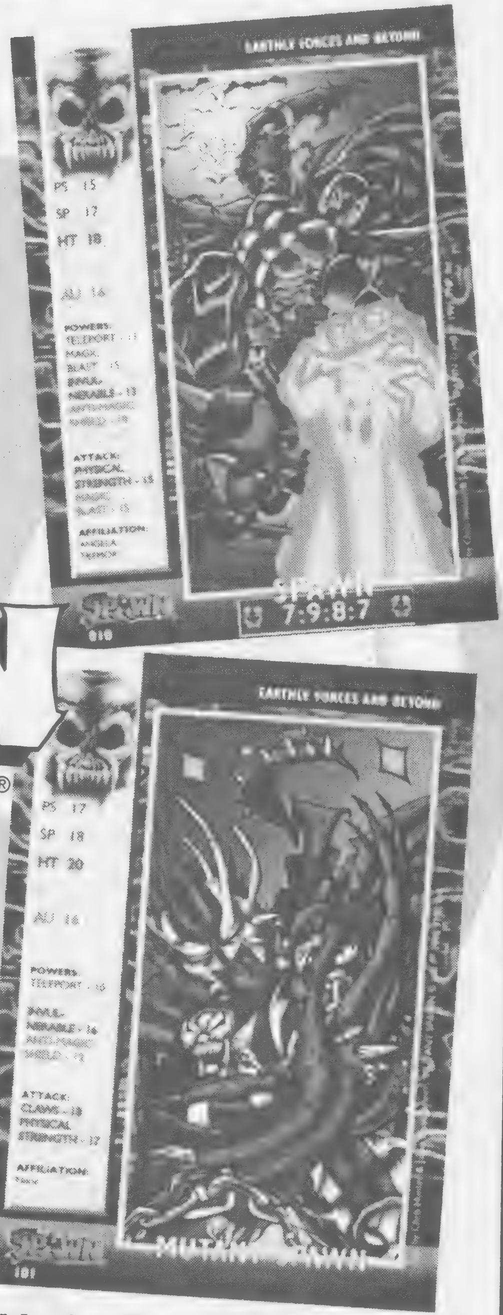
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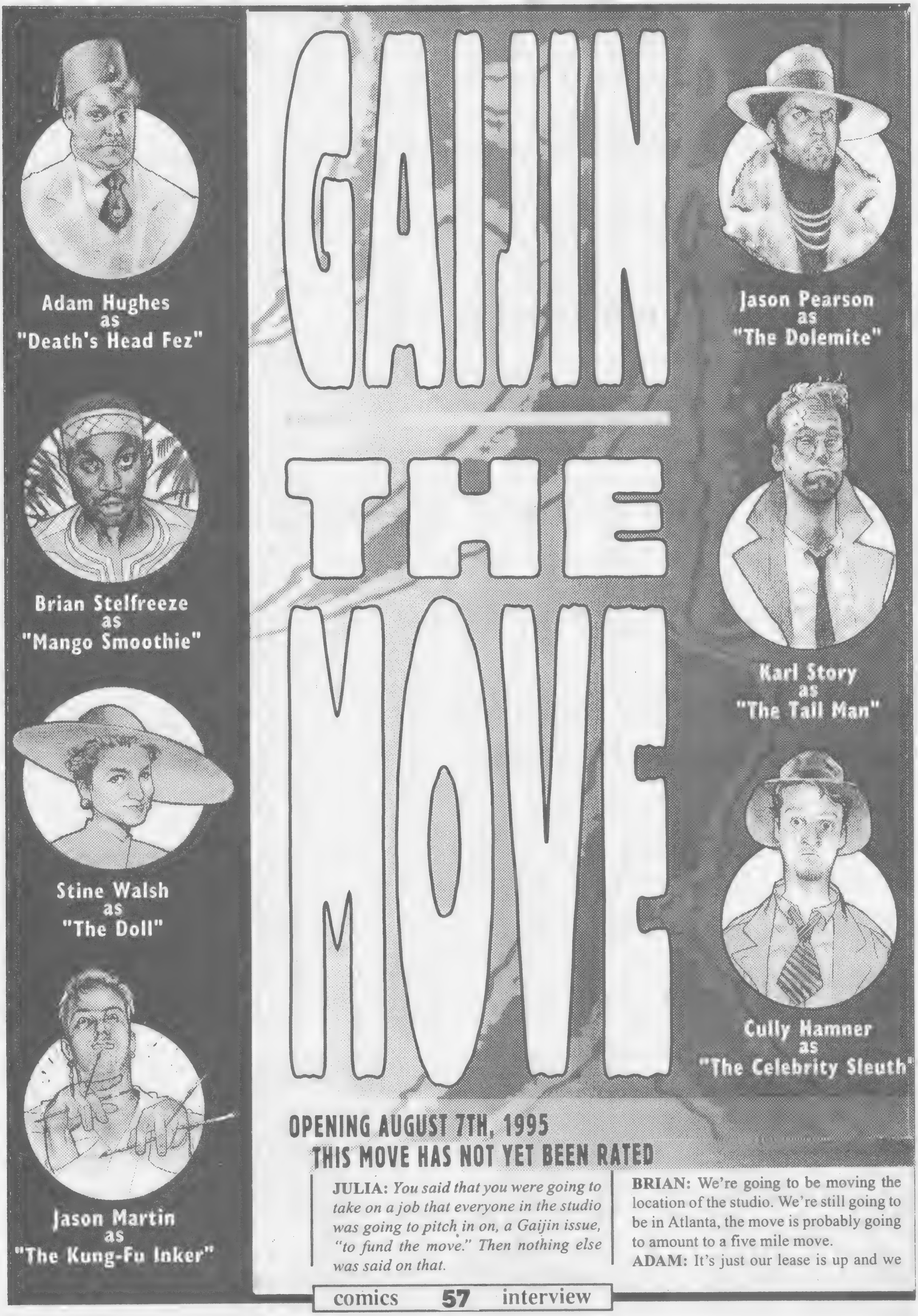
“Our room at the new studio: I’m Oscar —”


Adam Hughes
as
"Death's Head Fez"
Brian Stelfreeze
as
"Mango Smoothie"
Stine Walsh
as
"The Doll"
Jason Martin
as
"The Kung-Fu Inker"
GAIJIN
THE
MOVE
Jason Pearson
as
"The Dolemite"
Karl Story
as
"The Tall Man"
Cully Hamner
as
"The Celebrity Sleuth"
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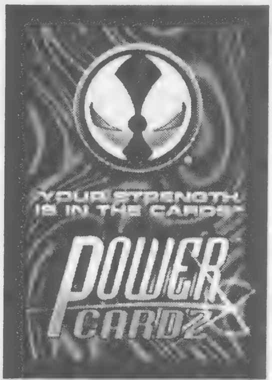
JULIA: *You said that you were going to take on a job that everyone in the studio was going to pitch in on, a Gaijin issue, “to fund the move.” Then nothing else was said on that.*

BRIAN: We’re going to be moving the location of the studio. We’re still going to be in Atlanta, the move is probably going to amount to a five mile move.

ADAM: It’s just our lease is up and we

SPAWN POWER CARDZ CHECKLIST

#	CARD TITLE	FREQUENCY
1	Spawn - 8:9:8:7	Ultra-Rare
2	Angela	Rare
3	Violator	Popular
4	Clown	Popular
5	Overtkill	Common
6	Terry Fitzgerald	Common
7	Wanda Blake	Common
8	Sam Burke	Popular
9	Twitch Williams	Popular
10	Spawn - 7:9:8:7	Rare
11	Commando Spawn	Popular
12	Pilot Spawn	Popular
13	Ninja Spawn	Ultra-Rare
14	Giant Spawn	Common
15	Al Simmons	Popular
16	Vacillator	Ultra-Rare
17	Vaporizer	Ultra-Rare
18	Victimizer	Ultra-Rare
19	Vandalizer	Popular
20	Spawn - 6:8:8:7	Popular
21	Villifier	Ultra-Rare
22	Admonisher	Common
23	Angelic Servitors	Popular
24	Soul-Trapper	Popular
25	Kuan Yin	Popular
26	Anahita	Popular
27	Saranyu	Popular
28	Harry Houdini	Ultra-Rare
29	Tremor	Popular
30	Spawn - 5:7:7:6	Popular
31	Surielle	Popular
32	Gabrielle	Ultra-Rare
33	Anti-Spawn	Common
34	Byron	Common
35	The Nerd Gang	Common
36	James	Common
37	The Creep Gang	Common
38	The Redeemer	Ultra-Rare
39	The Curse	Common
40	Spawn - 4:7:6:5	Common
41	Billy Kincaid	Common
42	Concerned Citizens	Common
43	Hell Creatures	Common
44	Brains	Common
45	Divvy	Common
46	Smokey	Common
47	Counter Maneuver	Common
48	Tony Twist	Popular
49	Sandalphon Dragon	Ultra-Rare
50	Spawn - 3:5:5:4	Common
51	Elemental Fire	Common
52	Bums	Popular
53	C.I.A. Contact	Common
54	Stasis Field	Ultra-Rare
55	Metatron	Rare
56	Callindra	Common
57	Smut	Common
58	Ticki-Tacki	Popular
59	Wampyr	Common
60	Medieval Spawn - 8:9:8:9	Ultra-Rare
61	Guardian Angel	Common
62	Drone Angels	Common
63	Grandma Blake	Common
64	Media Contact	Common
65	Police Contact	Popular
66	Simmonsville	Popular
67	Elysium	Popular
68	Darklands	Popular
69	The Overlap	Popular
70	Medieval Spawn - 7:9:8:6	Rare
71	Shadowlands	Popular
72	Spawnmobile	Common
73	Macneill & Volokhov	Rare
74	Prime Monad	Rare
75	Myrlu Bond	Rare
76	Angela's Lance	Popular
77	Abduct Cyan	Common
78	Assault Terry	Popular
79	Abduct Wanda	Popular
80	Medieval Spawn - 6:7:8:8	Popular
81	Robot Duplicate	Popular
82	Monster Rig	Popular
83	Violator Chopper	Ultra-Rare
84	Spawn Air Cycle	Rare
85	The Flux	Rare
86	Demon Horde	Popular
87	Necro-Plasm	Common
88	Mafia Hitmen	Rare
89	Nacreous Containment	Common
90	Medieval Spawn - 5:6:7:8	Popular
91	Lightning Reflexes	Common
92	Automatic Dodge	Common
93	Neutralize	Common
94	Big Gun	Common
95	Persistence	Common
96	Counter Enhancement	Popular
97	Rebirth!	Rare
98	Team Support	Ultra-Rare
99	Spawn Battle Horse	Ultra-Rare
100	Medieval Spawn - 4:6:8:9	Common
101	Mutant Spawn	Rare
102	Future Spawn	Ultra-Rare
103	Dark Broody Guy	Common
104	Rogue Myrlu	Popular
105	Rogue Angel	Common
106	Thugs	Common
107	Vertebreaker	Ultra-Rare
108	Boomer	Popular
109	Cthugan Metabuse	Popular
110	Medieval Spawn - 3:6:6:6	Common
111	Soul-Scalper	Popular
112	Ice-Shrimp	Popular
113	Meta-Squid	Common
114	Arsenal	Rare
115	Guardian	Rare
116	Vindicator	Popular
117	Count Cagliostro	Ultra-Rare
118	Jason Wynn	Ultra-Rare
119	Hand of Malebolgia	Common
120	Fast Attack	Common
121	Force Field	Common
122	Glancing Blow	Common
123	Uneasy Truce	Popular
124	Partner	Popular
125	Bullseye!	Popular
126	Rejuvenate	Common
127	Berserk!	Popular
128	Final Strike	Popular
129	Haymaker	Popular
130	Hard Target	Common
131	Return Fire	Popular
132	Dazed	Popular
133	Forestall	Common
134	Disarm	Popular
135	Mystical Sword	Rare
136	Mystical Armor	Ultra-Rare
137	Warrior Angel	Common
138	Spawn Alley	Popular
139	Street Tank	Popular
140	Sibling Rivalry	Common
141	Cosmic Angela	Ultra-Rare
142	Soul-Gourmet	Popular
143	Chain Frenzy!	Rare
144	Spawn Unmasked!	Rare
145	Cape Attack!	Rare
146	Divine Intervention	Rare
147	Angelic Ribbons	Rare
148	Hunting License	Rare
149	Blood Scrying	Rare
150	Call Phlebiac	Rare
151	Phlebiac Taunt	Rare
152	First Impression	Common
153	Shadow of Evil	Common
154	Holy Light	Common
155	Innocent Bystanders	Common
156	The Fuzz	Common
157	Bless	Common
158	Curse	Common
159	Image Crossover	Rare
160	Company Crossover	Rare
161	Takeover Bowery	Common
162	Invade Elysium	Common
163	Invade Darklands	Common
164	Invade Earth	Common
165	Wreak Havoc	Common
166	Torment The Living	Common
167	Destroy Building	Common
168	Control Organized Crime	Common
169	Assassination Attempt	Common
170	Takeover Satellite	Common
171	Power Drain	Popular
172	Massive Strength	Rare
173	Massive Speed	Rare
174	Massive Will	Common
175	Massive Aura	Common
176	Blinding Flash	Popular
177	Protected Senses	Common
178	Terran Affairs Contact	Popular
179	Tactical Nuke	Popular
180	Discover Armory	Popular
181	Hell Corsairs	Common
182	Power Booster	Rare
183	Rafael	Rare
184	John Sansker	Rare
185	Chief Banks	Popular
186	Krazed Klansmen	Popular
187	Dark Kincaid	Popular
188	Cut Throat (Pirate Spawn)	Rare
189	Grifter	Rare
190	Fairchild	Rare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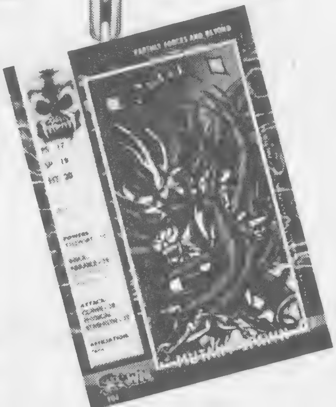
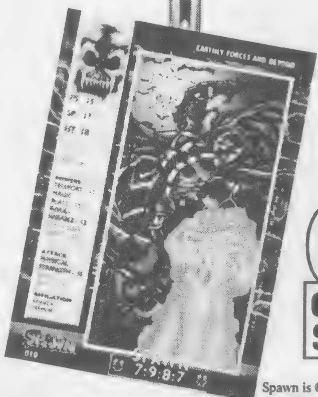
POWER CARDZ





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“— a[illegible]rian’s going to be Felix *(laughter)*.”

want a different place.

BRIAN: The studio is expanding, and with expansion comes move because we can no longer fit the container that we’ve been poured into.

ADAM: Yeah, that’s pretty much it.

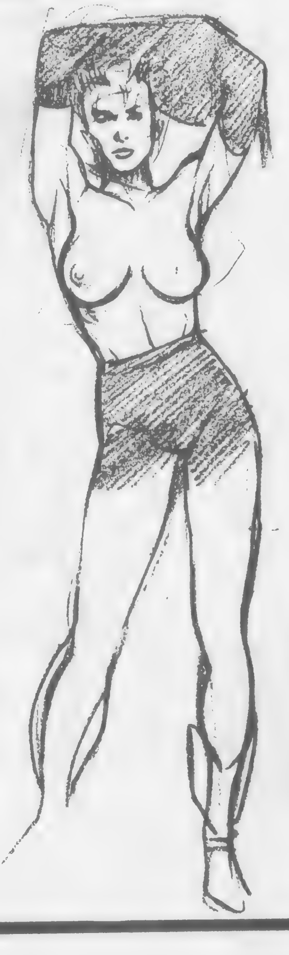
JULIA: *So, are you having other artists join you, a bigger group?*

ADAM: No.

BRIAN: No no no.

ADAM: We just —

BRIAN: We’ve found that the group that we have now is *perfect*.



ADAM: It’s just a matter of — it’s kind of a change of pace. We don’t have any more room for *personal* growth in the studio. And being the Fred Sanford of Gaijin Studios *(laughter)* I need more room for shit, you know. My personal filing system is chaos theory in essence.

BRIAN: There have been many times a butterfly has flapped his wings in Adam’s area and caused total destruction. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: You see, that’s going to be the coolest thing about me and Brian’s area, because I’m going to be Oscar and he’s going to be Felix. That’s going to be our room at the new studio; it’s going to be like Brian’s posh, spartan area, then my area is going to look like **Jonathan Winters’** attic. *(Laughter.)* I’ll walk in and there’ll be a valkyrie helmet and I won’t know where it came from, and I won’t question the fact that it’s there. *(Lovingly —)* “Oh, part of my area.” *(Laughter.)* Stine’s actually caught me doing this, like I’ll be cleaning my area once every couple of weeks and I’ll go, “Oh, a check.” *(Laughter.)* She’ll say, “You didn’t cash your check?” I’ll go, “Is it still good?” Some of these corporate checks you’ve got to cash in 90 days or they’re void.

JULIA: *“It’s 89 days today and it was under this valkyrie helmet.”*

ADAM: “I’ve got a check from a company that went out of business, is this a collectable?” *(Laughter.)* I want to do this **Adam Hughes** sketchbook someday and I really want there to be a photo section on the studio. I just want everybody in the studio to be in the book, you know. This is **Jason Pearson’s** area, perfect, functional — it’s like the Terminator production facility, not an ounce of wasted space. Brian’s area, Brian’s hyperbaric **Howard Hughes** disease free area. *(Laughter.)* And then there’s Cully’s area which is rife with bigfoots and anal probes. *(Laughter.)* Then there’s my area. My area’s kind of like a MUPPET SHOW because you can never see my feet, just this body walking around in all this stuff. I think that just shows off the different personalities in the studio.

DAK: *Somewhat towards the outset of this you said, “One of my gripes, one of my* many *gripes —”*

ADAM: I’m a miserable guy.

DAK: *Have we missed anything?*

ADAM: I don’t want to talk about my gripes, I don’t want to be seen as like a miserable cuss. I’m not ready to take a stab at **Mike Mignola’s** title as the grumpiest young guy in comics. *(Laughter.)* I’m not ready to take on **Mike Tyson.**

DAK: *Anything you want to get into that we didn’t get into?*

ADAM: Well, we hit on all of the touchy things, didn’t we. There’s not much else to —

BRIAN: We got the good stuff.

ADAM: Got the meat, you know.

BRIAN: Well, something I’d like to know from you is the future as far as **Adam Hughes** is concerned. Basically what I mean by that is: What would be your best case scenario? What is what you would personally like to be doing, where would you like to go with it? If you could have it all?

ADAM: Is this before or after **Ed McMahon** calls? *(Laughter.)*

JULIA: *Well, you recently were asked to perhaps do something in animation, that didn’t pan out.*

ADAM: Oh, that — *here’s* a gripe! *(Laughter.)*

JULIA: *Is that an area you’d like to go into?*

ADAM: Oh, hell, no! The only reason I was excited was because **U2** wanted the animation, I was like *(hyperventilation)*, “Hhhh! Hhhh! Hhhh! Hhhh!”

JULIA: *Oh, it was for U2?*

"U2 wanted a real comic-book artist to

ADAM: Yeah, it was —

BRIAN: There's another thing where the BATMAN movie screwed Adam.

ADAM: Yeah! *Yeah!* Those damn nipples!

BRIAN: Those damn nipples, that goddamn pink Two Face. *(Laughter.)*

ADAM: I got a call from some chap in Dublin, he basically said that he was working for a production and **U2** — because, you know, these superhero movies really do well with pop songs that have nothing to do with the movies — they got **U2** to write and record a song for BATMAN FOREVER. By the time this interview comes out it'll be super past tense, right now the BATMAN movie is still about three weeks away. But **U2** thought it would be cool if the video had animated bits in it, and they wanted a real honest-to-goodness comic-book artist to design the **U2** guys as animated characters. Like, I got the call because I was the guy they all agreed could do the job.

And I went berserk! I was literally dancing around the studio. I was an idiot. *(Laughter.)* I should have heard the harsh rasp of reality somewhere in there, but I was just for two days in seventh heaven thinking, "I'm going to Dublin, I'm going to hang out with **U2!"** I got this call around May 8th, and I got a fax two days later, basically the record company wanted the video release for June 1st. Not even the Disney Studio cranking 24 hours a day could produce three minutes of animation in three weeks, that's just physically impossible. It's like getting a phone call, **"Elle MacPherson** wants to have sex with you, just beeeeeep." *(Faux Scream!)* Then you're like, "Well, this will make an interesting anecdote for an interview." *(Laughter.)* I coulda been a contenda.

JULIA: *But you were the man they chose.*

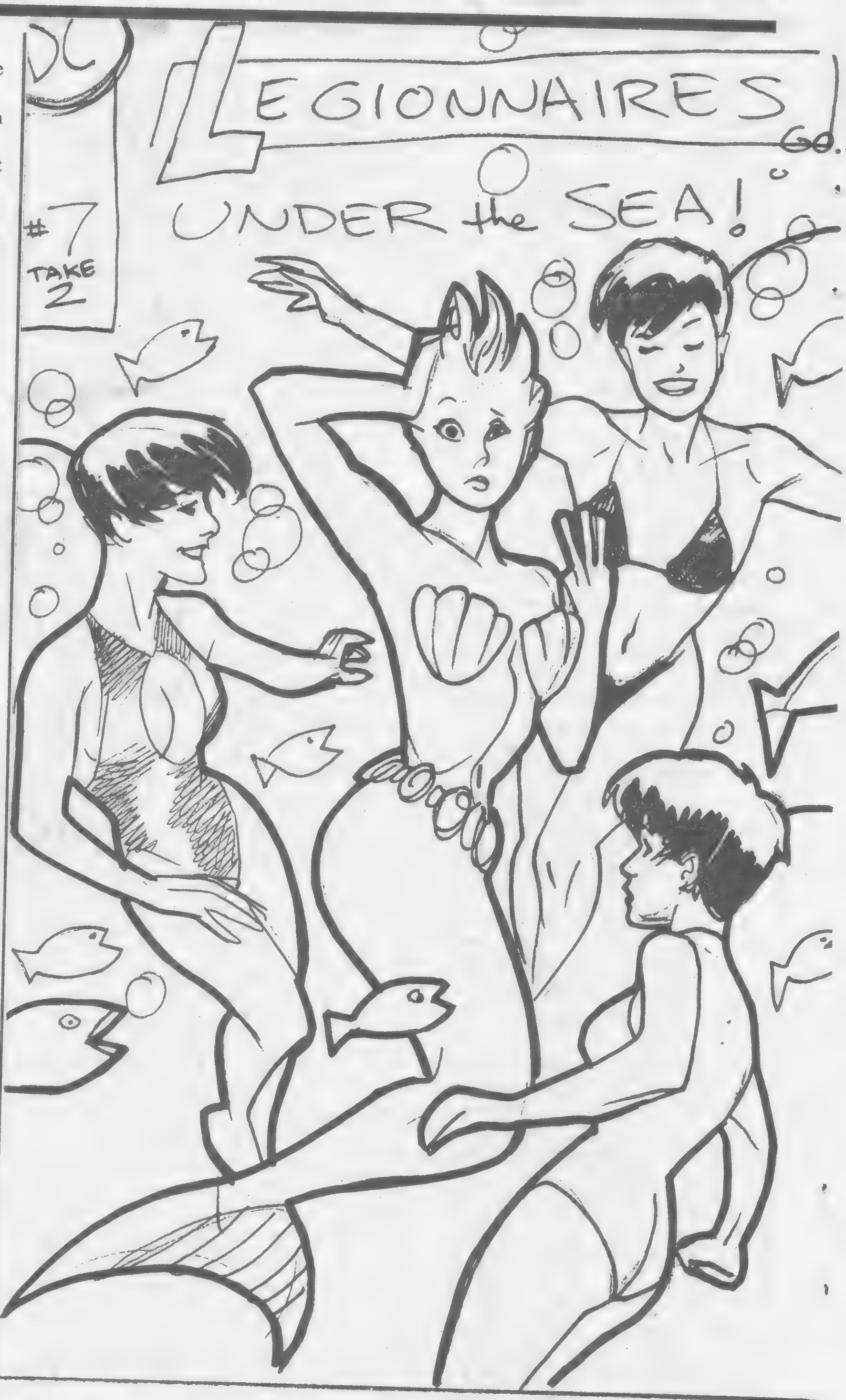
ADAM: Yeah.

DAK: *Isn't it weird, though — I don't know if you have the same sensation or not — but when you work in comics most often you work alone in this sort of hermetically sealed vacuum. You look at other media things and it's like this cool stuff's over here by these other people that don't live in the real world. When something like this happens it's like, "Wow, these people actually look at my work."*

ADAM: That continually amazes me. I get offers for jobs, like after the STAR TREK graphic novel I got offered a STAR TREK: NEXT GENERATION mini-series written by **Diane Duane,** who wrote some of the *best* TREK novels that Pocket Books puts out. I was like, "Wow, she saw my stuff." There was a CATWOMAN one-shot written by **Erik Van Lustbader** and I was his first choice; they called me up and asked me if I could do it, and I couldn't. It's just really *weird,* you know. It is really *odd,* I am just continually *baffled*. And sometimes I get a little scared thinking: Who *does* know my name, who *has* seen my work?

JULIA: *We get mail to COMICS INTERVIEW from* everywhere!

DAK: *In one day, we had somebody from Iran ordering COMICS INTER-*



design the guys as animated characters.”

VIEW. And one from Hong Kong, one from Switzerland.

JULIA: *The United Arab Emirates; Norway; it was like eight in one day.*

DAK: *And while I feel almost isolated from the world, in a way, up here on the mountain top — the world is definitely shrinking, you know.*

ADAM: It really weirds you out because you're thinking, “Man, I'm talking to people I didn't even know were there.”

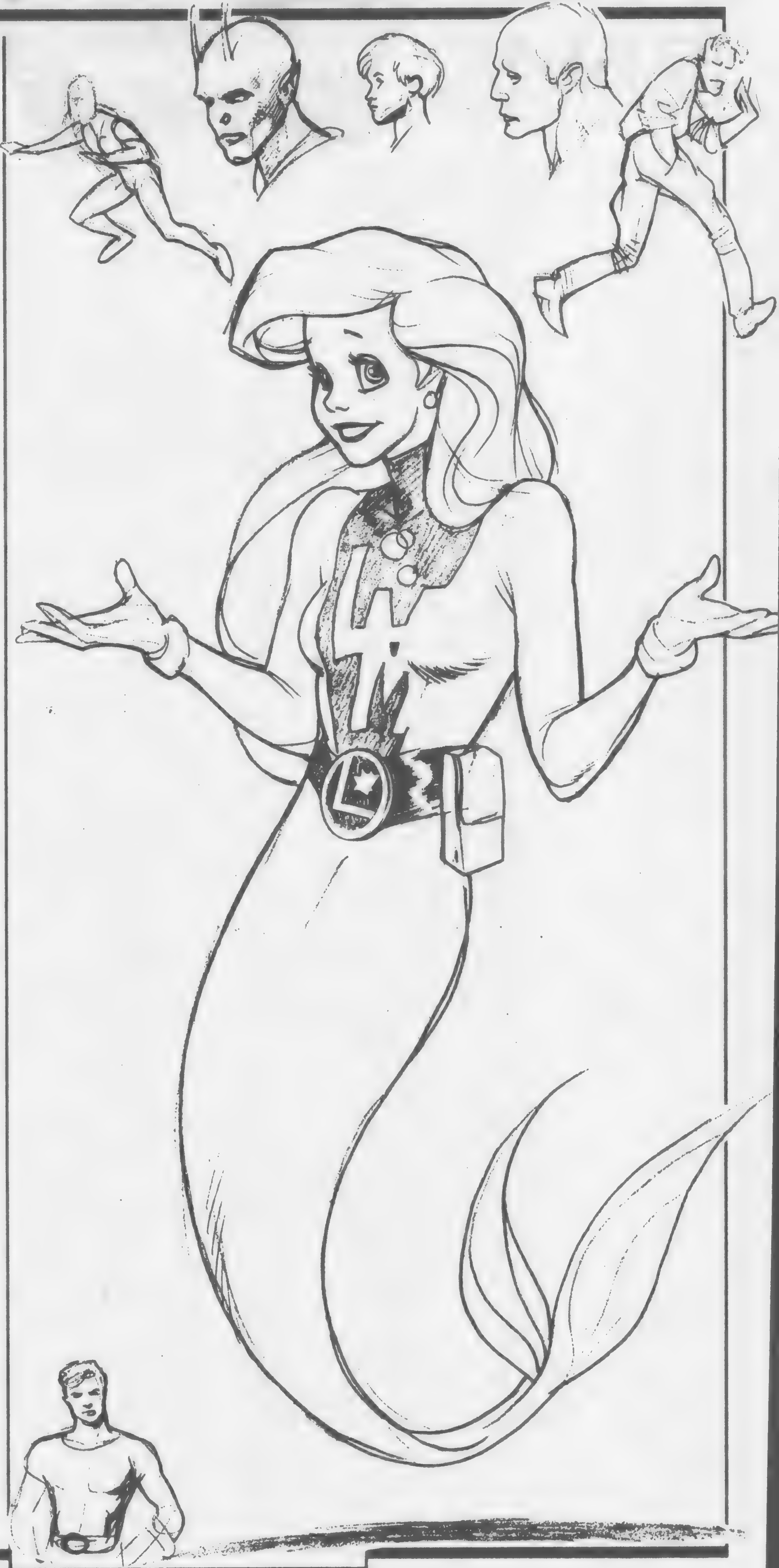
DAK: *And people who might — you said it was very important to you not to be misinterpreted — but talking to people to whom English may be a second or third language, from a culture to which our way of thinking may be wholly and completely alien, let alone being misinterpreted, what about just being understood? How might they think about what you're saying through their cultural filter, their religious bias, whatever?*

ADAM: I was stunned when I went to the Glasgow convention in '91, there were people from the Outer Hebrides that came to this convention who were big MAZE AGENCY fans. I couldn't believe it. Yeah, I could understand JUSTICE LEAGUE, DC Comics goes all over the planet, but MAZE AGENCY? That just wigs me out. And they all needed translators, I didn't talk to anyone who could talk straight. *(Laughter.)*

I had a friend over and for some reason she ended up looking at my high school yearbook photo from that Build Your Own Jesus school — I love that, that is so cool; I'm going to bake in a lake for that one, but that is so cool. *(Laughter.)* Lake of fire, that's from “Revelations” by the way. I had one teacher who was just hellfire and brimstone, this guy was just like the guy who started the Mormons, I mean he was like, “You heathen dog, you'll bake in a lake! I am the god of hellfire!” *(Laughter.)* He was just wacky, you know. His name was Brother Right.

But anyway, my high school yearbook photo, there's that useless pap that goes with your high school yearbook photo, future plans and stuff like that. I wrote, with the sort of innocence and naivete of an 18-year-old: To be a world famous artist. She looked at me and said, “So, now what are you going to do?” I went, “Well, I'm not world famous.” She kind of went, “Well, is there somebody on every continent who knows who you are?” I went, “Yeah, I guess you're right.” *(Laughter.)* I haven't gotten any letters from any penguins or anything, but I've gotten stuff from Australia, from Europe, from Africa; it's just all over.

That's the thing I can't handle, is fan



CALIBER™
GAME
SYSTEMS

POWERCARDZ CHECKLIST

POWER CARDZ™

#	CARD	FREQ.
1	Tempered Steele	Ultra Rare
2	Seeker	Ultra Rare
3	Superior	Ultra Rare
4	Christiana Blood	Common
5	Tamara Rose	Common
6	Time Stepper	Rare
7	Temblor	Popular
8	Barricade	Rare
9	Soulfire	Rare
10	Shrike	Popular
11	Brightblade	Popular
12	Shalimar	Popular
13	Pandora	Popular
14	Shepherd	Popular
15	Race Danger	Common
16	Agent Parsons	Common
17	Haggard	Common
18	Midnight Montana	Common
19	Angel Shadow	Common
20	Skorch	Common
21	Adriana Kessler	Common
22	Hope LeBeck	Common
23	Litlit	Common
24	Vanessa	Common
25	Cybertek	Popular
26	Selene LeBeck	Common
27	Caijun	Common
28	Jewel	Common
29	Marhawk	Common
30	Tek Knight	Popular
31	Khamal Khan	Common
32	Bronze Blade	Common
33	T-Rex	Common
34	Frenzy	Popular
35	Ragtag	Common
36	Bobtail	Common
37	Marta	Ultra Rare
38	Huntarr	Common
39	The Eel	Common
40	Dominion	Popular
41	Rhianna	Popular
42	Soul Breed	Common
43	Trimalion	Common
44	Samuroid	Popular
45	Byre	Common
46	John Hollister	Common
47	CHESS Unit	Common
48	Katharsys	Rare
49	Garrick	Popular
50	Double Cross	Common
51	Portyl	Popular
52	Merlin	Ultra Rare
53	One Eyed Jack	Common
54	Magaira	Popular
55	Lilith	Popular
56	Robespierre	Popular
57	Tig	Common
58	Pando	Common
59	Saki	Common
60	Rave	Common
61	Automatic Dodge	Common
62	Big Gun	Common
63	Lightning Reflexes	Common
64	Persistance	Common
65	Time Shard I	Popular
66	Time Shard II	Popular
67	Counter Enhancement	Common
68	Informant	Popular
69	Sidekick	Rare
70	Hostage	Common
71	Thugs	Common
72	Med-Lab	Popular
73	Cops	Common
74	Cyber Appendage	Popular
75	Fast Attack	Common
76	Force Field	Common
77	Glancing Blow	Common
78	Ion Tank	Popular
79	Uneasy Truce	Popular
80	Partner	Popular
81	Bullseye!	Popular
82	Neutralize	Common
83	Rejuvenate	Common
84	Great Luck	Common
85	Berserk!	Popular
86	Mind Control	Popular
87	Mystic Claw	Popular
88	Cybercycle	Common
89	N.I.K.E.	Popular
90	Damsel in Distress	Common
91	Mysterious Ally	Popular
92	Saboteur	Popular
93	Sensei	Popular
94	Deck Soldiers	Popular
95	Arcane Powers	Popular
96	Time Ship	Rare
97	Time Lord Defender	Rare
98	Rebirth!	Popular
99	Team Support	Rare
100	Time Storm	Rare
101	Fatal Strike	Popular
102	Battle Armor	Popular
103	Natural Disaster	Popular
104	Mila-Police	Popular
105	Spy	Common
106	Mama Callie	Rare
107	Kalleth	Common
108	Warloch	Common
109	Vortex	Common
110	Fightmaster	Common
111	Retro	Common
112	Seraph	Common
113	Pioneer	Common
114	Frank Dietrich	Common
115	Witchfire	Common
116	Pierre Tepes	Common
117	Necrose	Common
118	Gurk	Common
119	Straight Jacket	Rare
120	Demonicus	Common
121	Klaash	Rare
122	Dark Enchantresses	Rare
123	Magistrate	Common
124	Grimbludd	Common
125	Infernus	Common
126	Warlace	Popular
127	Corporation	Ultra Rare
128	Headquarters	Ultra Rare
129	Mind Shield	Ultra Rare
130	Ultra-force Field	Ultra Rare
131	Magical Dweomer	Ultra Rare
132	Enhance Enhancement	Ultra Rare
133	Peculiar Terrain	Ultra Rare
134	Debriefing	Ultra Rare
135	Time-Stone	Ultra Rare
136	Haymaker	Popular
137	Hard Target	Popular
138	Return Fire	Popular
139	Arsenal	Rare
140	Ally	Popular
141	Psychic Probe	Popular
142	Force of Will	Common
143	Ghostly Guardian	Popular
144	Flare	Popular
145	Massive Strength	Rare
146	Massive Speed	Rare
147	Massive Will	Common
148	Massive Spirit	Common
149	Power Booster	Rare
150	Arch-Nemesis	Popular
151	Former Friends	Popular
152	Ultimate Faith	Popular
153	Enraged	Rare
154	Time Bomb	Popular
155	Paralysis	Common
156	Dazed	Popular
157	Aura of Fear	Popular
158	Vigilance	Common
159	Mimic Device	Popular
160	Manifest Power	Popular
161	Sonic Gun	Popular
162	Enfeeble	Popular
163	Ensnare	Popular
164	Ambush!	Popular
165	Takeover Corporation	Rare
166	Raid Headquarters	Rare
167	Double Team!	Popular
168	Forestall	Common
169	Disarm	Popular
170	Reflect Attack	Common
171	Ivory	Common
172	Call Hero	Rare
173	Indigo	Common
174	Peacekeeper	Ultra Rare
175	G.I.	Common
176	Tigercat	Common
177	Scythe	Common
178	Steal Technology	Common
179	Tap Magical Source	Common
180	Call Villain	Rare
181	Beck	Popular
182	Nightlinger	Popular
183	Mike	Popular
184	Computer Virus	Popular
185	Discover Identity	Rare
186	Stop Volcano	Common
187	Act of Terrorism	Common
188	Wyvern	Popular
189	Call Enhancement	Ultra Rare
190	Smokescreen	Popular
191	Flash Bomb	Rare
192	Berzerker	Popular
193	Fatigue	Rare
194	Blind Elimination	Rare
195	Sight Elimination	Ultra Rare
196	Doppleganger	Ultra Rare
197	Call Tech Force	Rare
198	Flaxen	Ultra Rare
199	Dark Flaxen	Ultra Rare
200	Bank Robbery	Common
201	Jewelry Heist	Common
202	Media Blitz	Common
203	Abduct City Official	Common
204	Abduct President	Common
205	Create Mass Hysteria	Common
206	Steal Major Satellite	Common
207	Harm Innocent People	Common
208	Takeover Network	Common
209	Destroy City	Common
210	Dominate Country	Common
211	Fusion	Rare
212	Gossamer	Common
213	Mother Russia	Rare
214	Fuego	Common
215	Wall	Common
216	Shamal	Common
217	Charon	Rare
218	Gnome	Popular
219	Tank	Rare
220	Komodo	Popular
221	Outrider	Common
222	Warhead	Popular
223	Procyon	Rare
224	Cheops	Popular
225	Sputnik	Common
226	Mime	Popular
227	Domino	Rare
228	Diabla	Rare
229	Sentinel	Popular
230	Oba	Popular
231	Lotus	Popular
232	Tokamak	Popular
233	Sir Steel	Popular
234	Hunter Seeker	Common
235	Jammin'	Common
236	Dr. Spencer	Common
237	Masterspy	Common
238	Thundershower	Rare
239	Tight Quarters	Rare
240	Outer Space	Rare
241	Open Sea	Rare
242	Typhoon	Rare
243	Earthquake	Rare
244	Dense Woodland	Common
245	Frozen Tundra	Common
246	Caul	Popular
247	Volcanic Upheaval	Common
248	Fool	Popular
249	Magician	Rare
250	High Priestess	Ultra Rare
251	Empress	Popular
252	Emperor	Popular
253	Hierophant	Popular
254	Lovers	Popular
255	Chariot	Popular
256	Justice	Popular
257	Hermit	Popular
258	Fortune	Popular
259	Strength	Popular
260	Hang Man	Popular
261	Death	Popular
262	Temperance	Popular
263	Devil	Popular
264	Tower	Popular
265	Star	Popular
266	Sun	Popular
267	Moon	Popular
268	Judgement	Rare
269	World	Rare
270	Blitz (Golden Age)	Common
271	Venus	Common
272	Ultiman (Golden Age)	Common
273	Thunder Girl	Common
274	Beacon (Golden Age)	Common
275	Blitz (Silver Age)	Common
276	Atomic Sub	Common
277	Ultiman (Silver Age)	Common
278	Knight Watchman	Common
279	Beacon (Silver Age)	Common
280	Mr. Mask	Common
281	Aquarius	Common
282	Capricorn	Common
283	Sagitarius	Common
284	Taurus	Common
285	Cancer	Common
286	Gemini	Common
287	Leo	Common
288	Virgo	Common
289	Libra	Common
290	Pisces	Common
291	Aries	Common
292	Scorpio	Common
293	Fleetwing	Rare
294	Umbra	Popular
295	Electric Blue	Popular
296	Catalyst	Ultra Rare
297	Wispmaid	Popular
298	Kabuki	Ultra Rare
299	King Zombie	Popular
300	Hellgirl	Ultra Rare

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“Psychosexual GHOST in the hands of an 11-year-old.”

mail. Sometimes, you know, like Brian will speak to me and I’ll forget to answer him — so how can I be expected to return correspondence? *(Laughter.)*

JULIA: *So, if you wish to send any fan mail from this interview to Adam, you can send it care of COMICS INTERVIEW and we’ll pass it on. But you will not get a reply.*

ADAM: I need to get a wacky postcard to send back. I got a fan letter the other day — and this is the thing that totally breaks my heart about GHOST not working out — I got a letter from an 11-year-old boy named Noah; he’s like the same kind of kid that **Babe Ruth** hit that home run for. You’ve got to read this, you’d be crushed. This letter, it was like:

Dear Mr. Hughes,

I am Noah, I am eleven years old. You are the greatest artist in the world. I want to be you someday. GHOST is my favorite comic book.

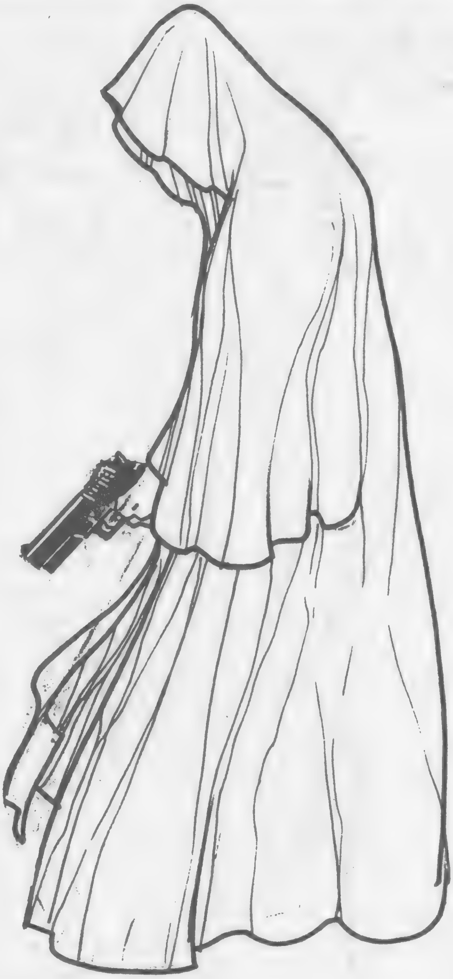
Which alarmed me, the psychosexual contents of GHOST in the hands of an 11-year-old. This kid’s going to climb a tower in Texas in ten years: I love you, Dad! *POP! POP! POP! (Laughter.)* And he drew me a little picture of Ghost, I was just feeling like crud. I felt like **Darryl Strawberry**, like I’m this kid’s hero but I’m on coke. *(Laughter.)* This kid loves GHOST, he’s going to be there every month, he’s going to be in for a rude surprise when I’m not.

I felt so bad I drew the kid a picture and mailed it back to him, and wrote him a little note and told him how great he was and not stop drawing. I’m sure this hulking, surly teenager will come up to me in ten years or something, “Hey, I took your advice, here’s my work.” Make me feel even older. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Don’t get me started.*

ADAM: I love meeting some of my childhood comic-book heroes, like **Byrne** or **Pérez**, it’s like, “Man, I remember reading your stuff when I was a fetus!” *(Laughter.)* “My Mom read your FF to me when I was in the womb.” You just sit there and watch their knees buckle. I know that it’s all circular and it’ll happen to me.

DAK: *When I started reading the Marvel stuff in the early-to-mid ’60s, the Golden Age was so far back it was out of sight. They were bringing back these really cool ancient characters, you know. Now I look at it, Captain America was gone for seven years and then brought back; seven years passes in my lifetime while I’m on my way to the post office.* (Laughter.) *But when you’re that age you have no temporal reference. There are kids reading comics today and their attitude is the same as mine was to the people I was reading in the ’60s, but it’s so weird because your own self concept is never that.*



Mark Propst, when he was staying at the guest cabin here, he was drawing X-THIEVES and SOUTHERN KNIGHTS for us and stuff, and he had never paid attention to the writers. He came up once and said, “You know, I got started at Marvel on THE DEFENDERS, it’s the stuff that really turned me on and got me into comics, and I was looking at my old issues and you wrote them!” It’s a compliment but, like you said, my knees just buckled.

ADAM: Well, can I do that to you now? *(Laughter.)* One of my most *cherished* comics when I was a real little little little kid was my grandmother took me out to the farmer’s market where they would sell comics that were returns, wacky stuff like that, and I got the LOGAN’S RUN adaptation. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *A movie that I hated!*

ADAM: I *loved* your LOGAN’S RUN adaptation. I never saw the movie until I was a teenager —

DAK: *The adaptation is genuinely way better than the movie.* (Laughter.) *The only reason I did it, I walked all around Marvel saying — well, what you guys were saying when you saw JOHNNY MORONIC just the other night —* (Laughter.) *Did nothing but rant about how rotten and miserable a movie it was. I saw LOGAN’S RUN and I was affronted: “They filmed this in a mall over the weekend, it’s the most moronically stupid movie I’ve ever seen.” So, I was like the guy that should never have taken that assignment, but they said George Pérez was drawing it. Like, George is my pal and I love his art, so I’ve got to do this comic. We just tried to make it as*

“My philosophy on life is that a boy becomes a

good as we could from the thing that it was, and my feeling was that both visually and in the writing — because I filled in the stupid plot holes, I actually invented motivations and rationales, reasons for these gaps in any kind of common sense — we got a good comic out of it. I haven't thought about that in a long time. (Laughter.) *But I say that comic blows the movie away, mainly because of George.*

ADAM: As a child I remember loving this comic. And I didn't know about comics shops in the late '70s, I was still worried about teeth coming in. *(Laughter.)* So I had LOGAN'S RUN #4 and this is wonderful, and then I saw the movie. “Who's this skinny fuck?” *(Laughter.)* I mean, **George Pérez** drew this Logan 5 like he was Captain America with sideburns, and Klaus inked it; I'll dig it out and show it to you because I've still got it.

DAK: *The work George put into some of those scenes, the detailing in some of the scenes in the old ruins, each individual leaf of thousands drawn — only George, you know. It was just incredible. Writing that stuff was hard because you never want to cover anything over but you have to put words in there. But he drew 8,000 leaves, they look neat, you don't want to put word balloons over that. But yes, thank you for reducing me to a heap of* — (Laughter.)

ADAM: It comes around, it'll happen to me. I'm looking forward to the day when some kid in a silver jumpsuit and a hoverboard comes up, “I really used to enjoy your INVERTIGO comics back in the 20th century.” *(Laughter.)* And I'll be like, “Yeah, back when we could actually go outside and the earth was a green world.” *(Laughter.)* See, I am such a big STAR TREK and STAR WARS fan that I cannot *wait* to talk to the class of 2010. You know, kids are always arrogant, they always think that the world was built *for* them, and the kids who are going to be in the first decade of the 21st century are going to be the *most* arrogant kids who've ever lived. They are going to be the most “We are the future!” In the standard human nature thing, the act of making yourself look so good you've got to tear somebody else down to do it just so the scales balance for some bastard reason, they are going to tear down everybody who isn't from the 21st century. I can't *wait* to talk to them and say, “Well, this is how we used to do it back in the 20th century.” *(Laughter.)*

JULIA: *We've only got six more years and that'll be a fact.*

man when he cracks open PLAYBOY and —”

ADAM: My philosophy on life is that a boy becomes a man when he cracks open an issue of PLAYBOY and the Playmate is actually younger than he is. You actually sit there and go, “Wow, she was a freshman when I graduated; I'm a man, dammit.” *(Laughter.)* A man has needs.

BRIAN: I remember reading through PLAYBOYs and looking at the Playmates and going, “Wow, Man, I can't wait until I get *that* old; I'm going to be scoring on babes like *this!*” Then, of course, one year I looked into the PLAYBOY and I had missed it, I had already shot by those babes.

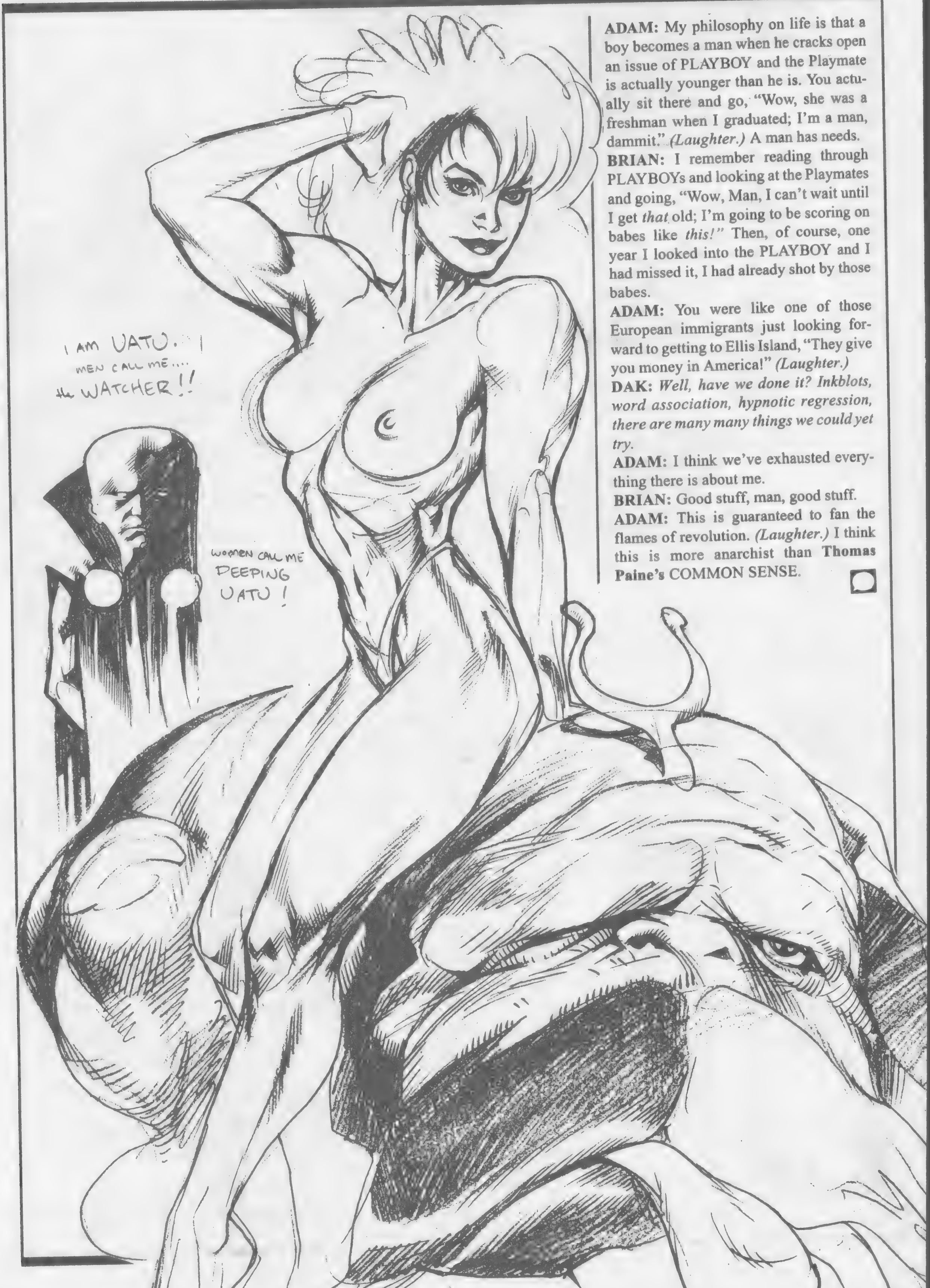
ADAM: You were like one of those European immigrants just looking forward to getting to Ellis Island, “They give you money in America!” *(Laughter.)*

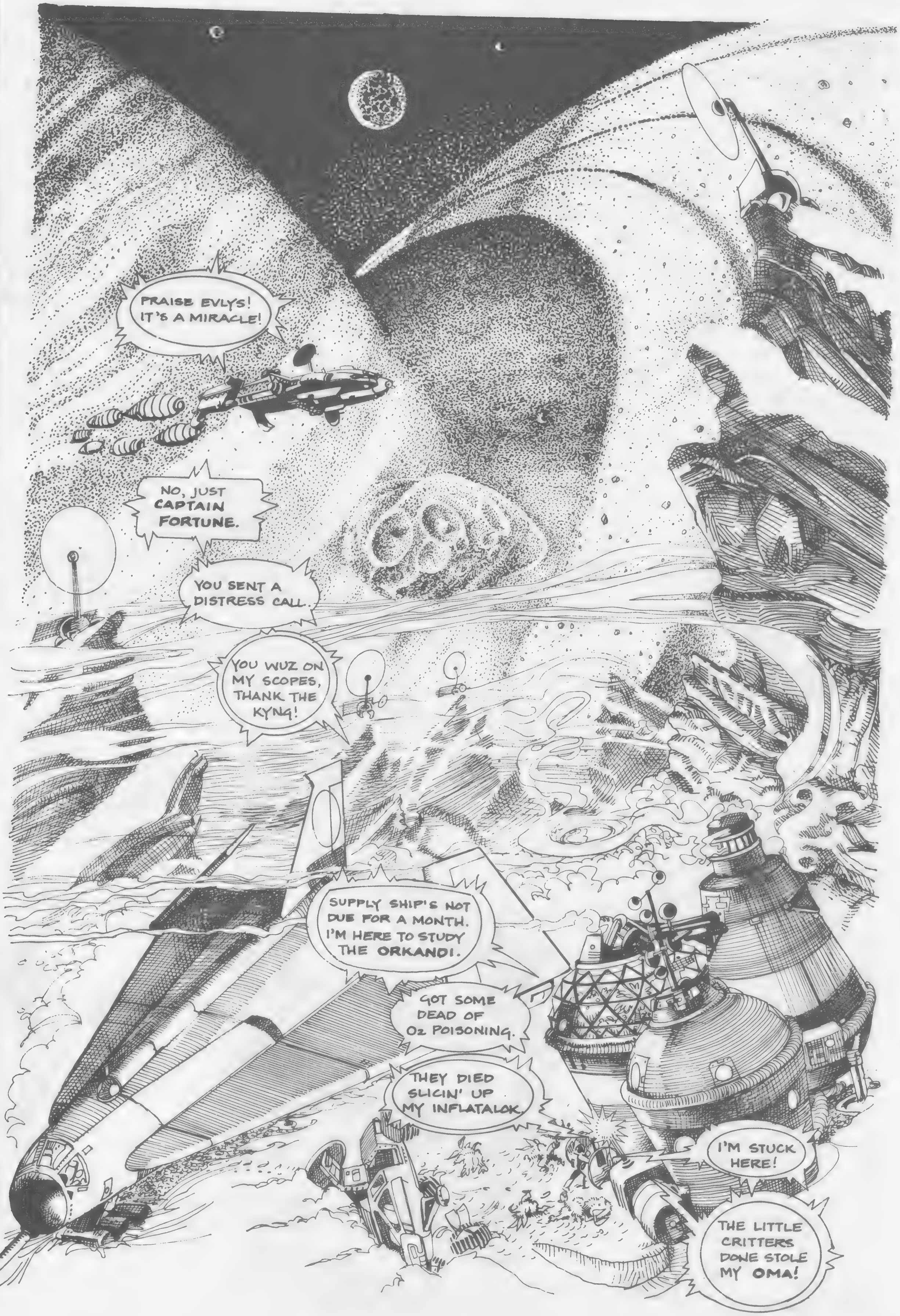
DAK: *Well, have we done it? Inkblots, word association, hypnotic regression, there are many many things we could yet try.*

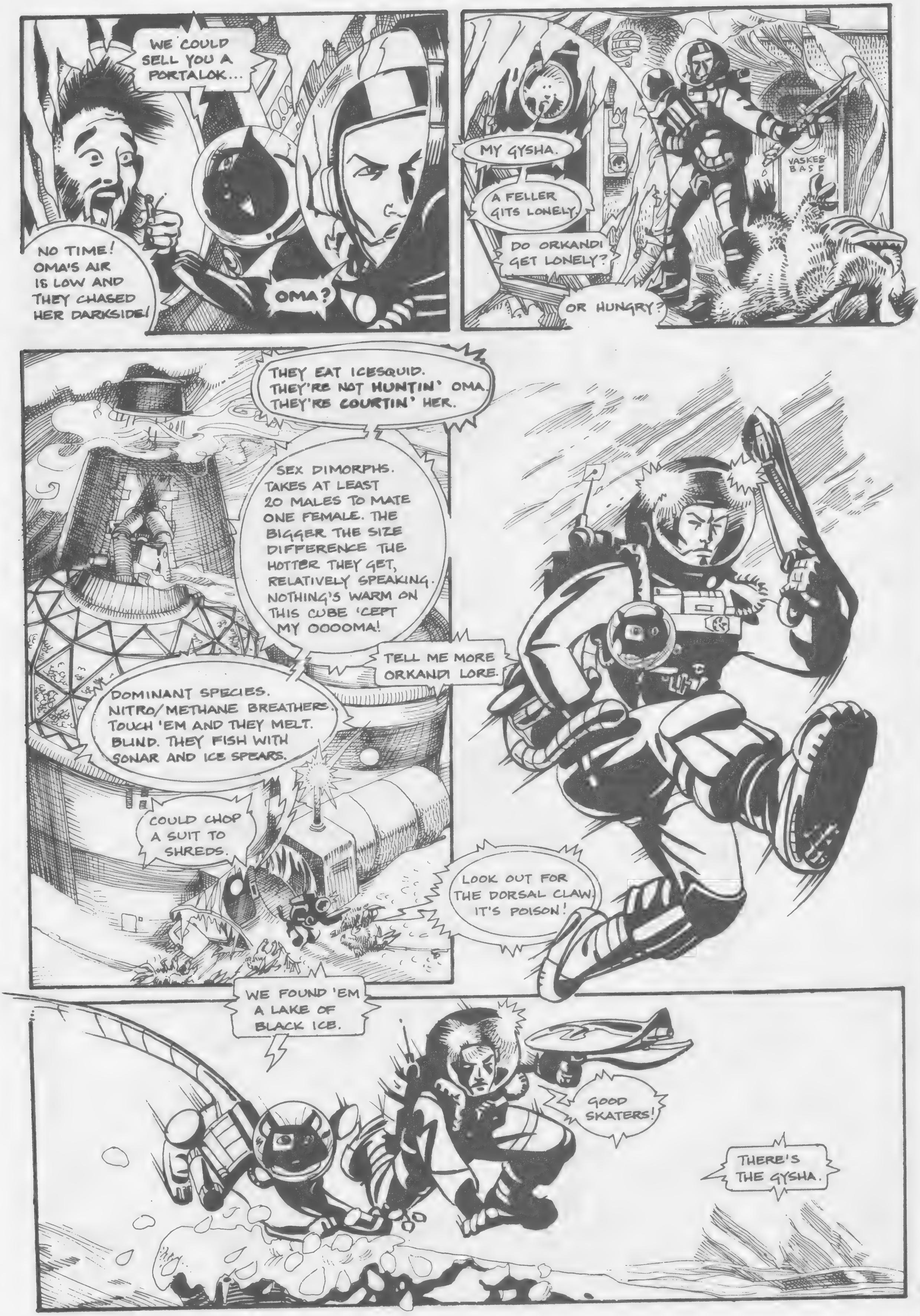
ADAM: I think we've exhausted everything there is about me.

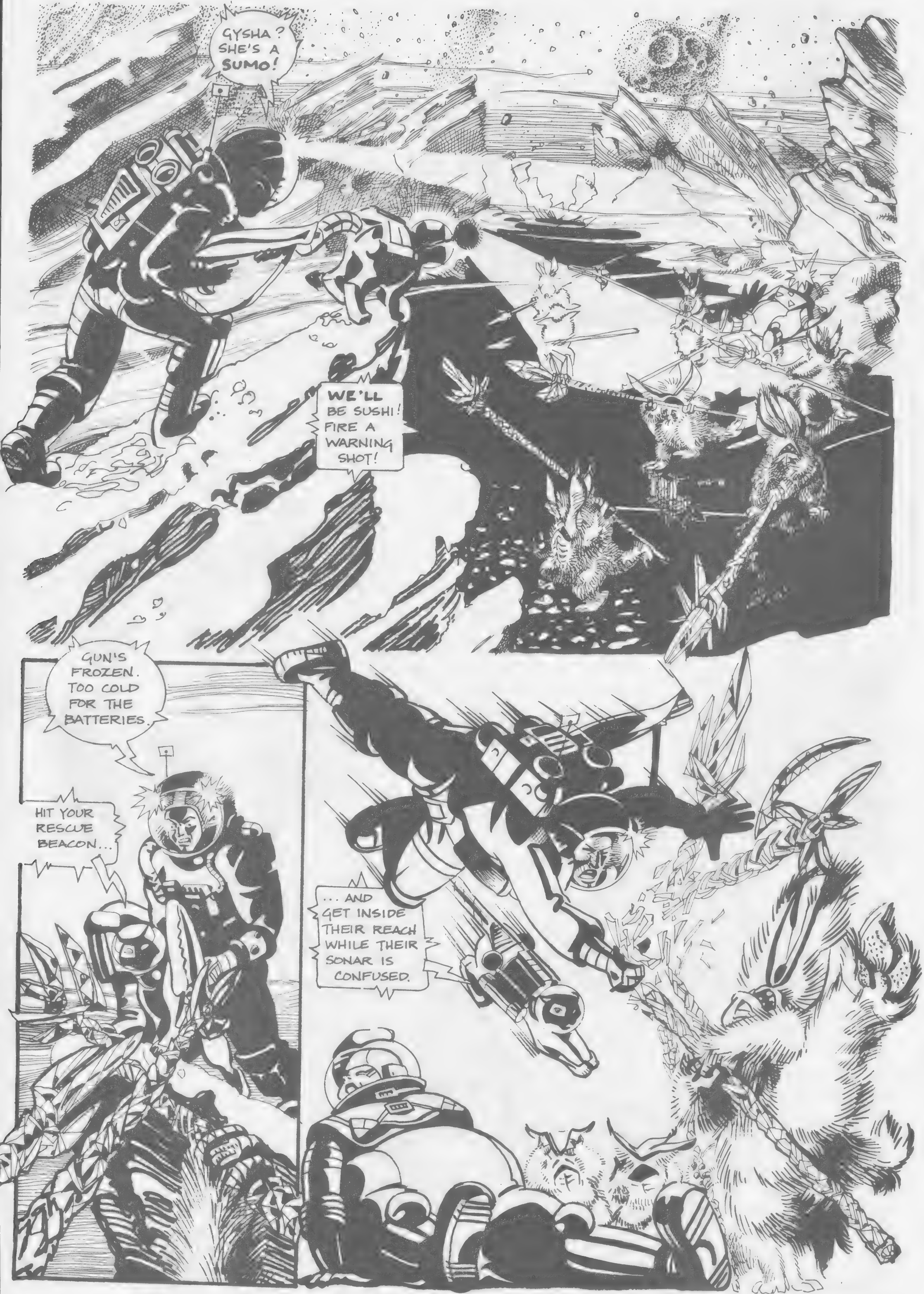
BRIAN: Good stuff, man, good stuff.

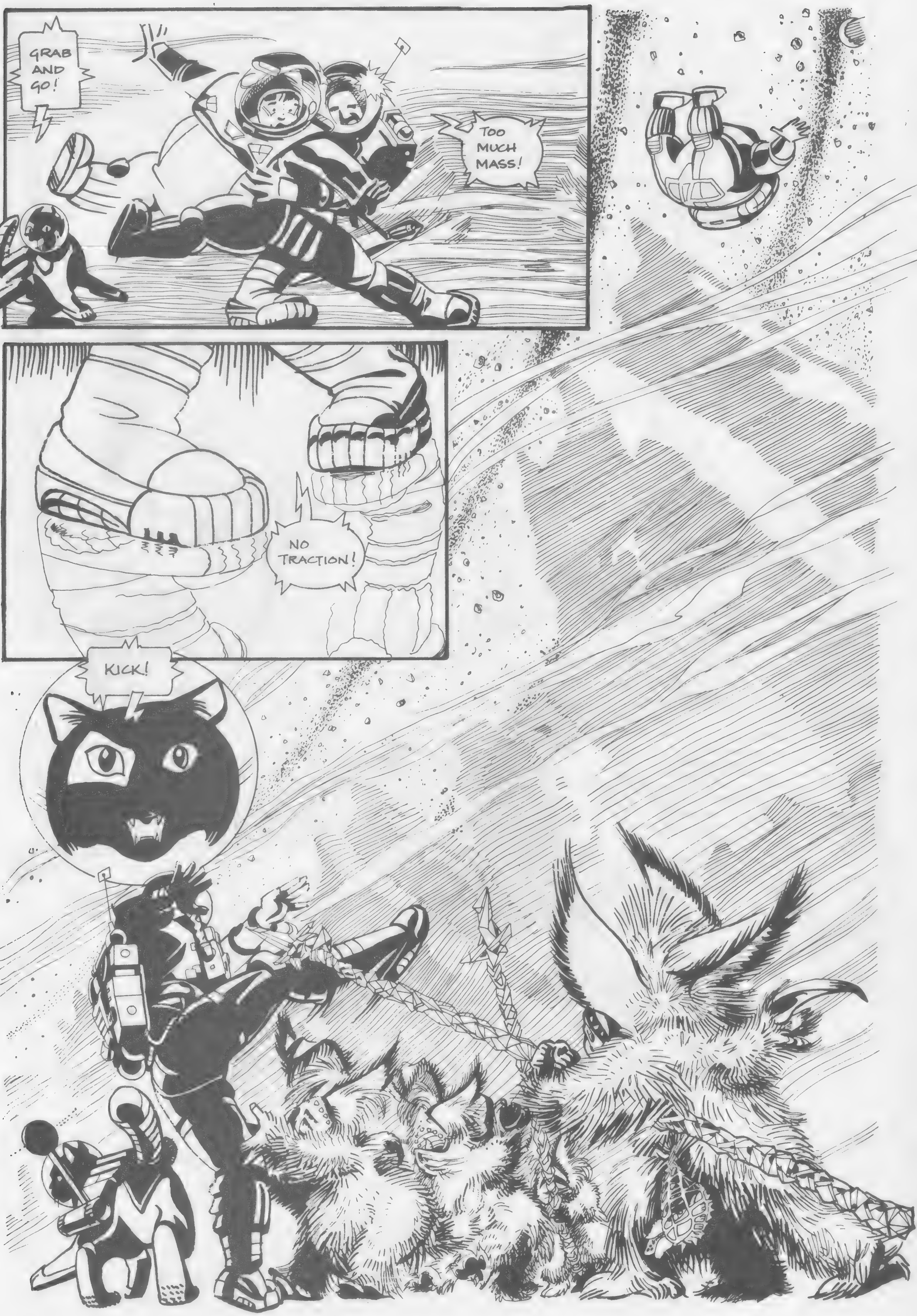
ADAM: This is guaranteed to fan the flames of revolution. *(Laughter.)* I think this is more anarchist than **Thomas Paine's** COMMON SENSE.

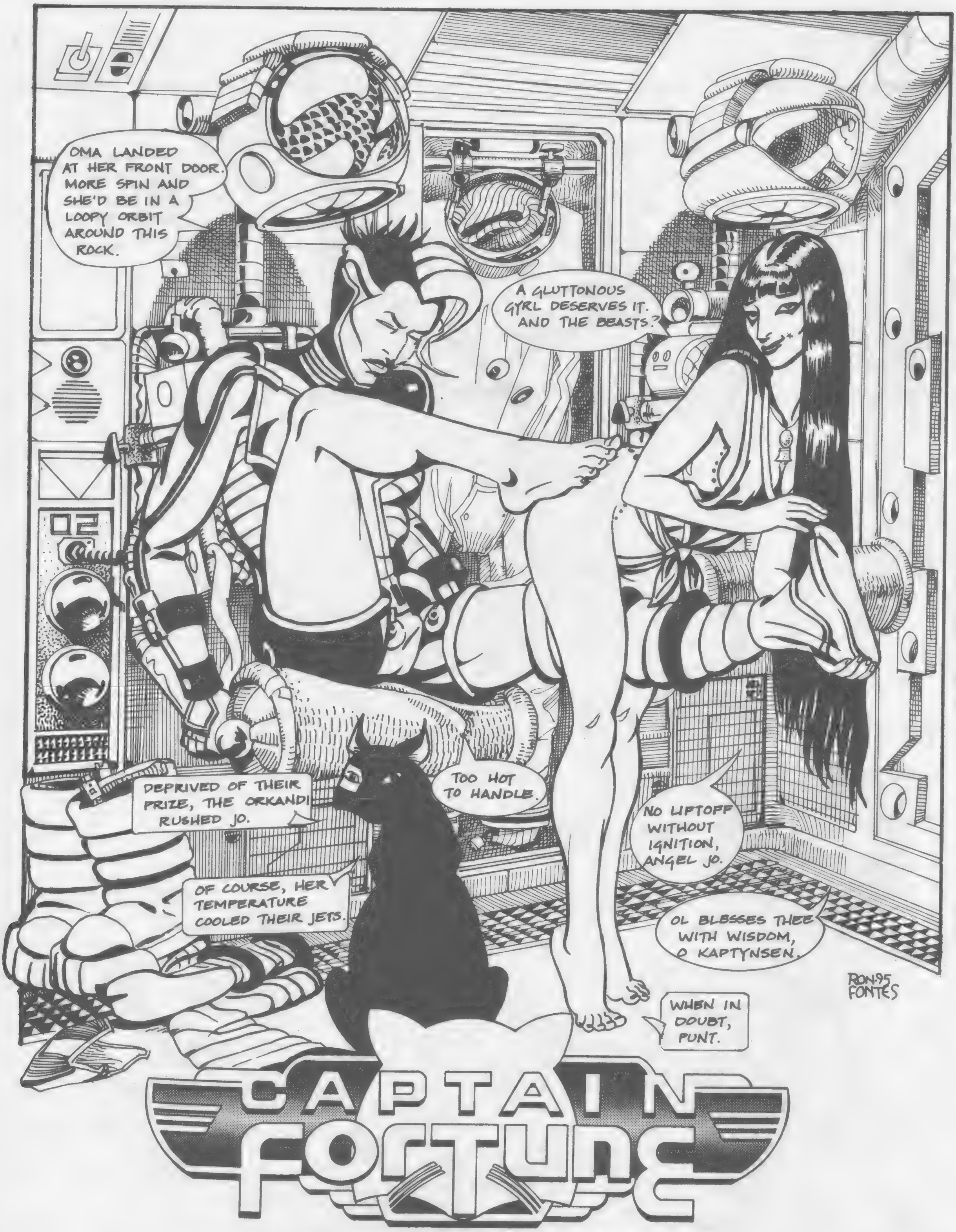

I AM UATU... I
MEN CALL ME....
the WATCHER!!
WOMEN CALL ME
PEEPING
UATU!


PRAISE EVLYS! IT'S A MIRACLE!
NO, JUST CAPTAIN FORTUNE.
YOU SENT A DISTRESS CALL.
YOU WUZ ON MY SCOPES, THANK THE KYNG!
SUPPLY SHIP'S NOT DUE FOR A MONTH. I'M HERE TO STUDY THE ORKANDI.
GOT SOME DEAD OF O2 POISONING.
THEY DIED SLICIN' UP MY INFLATALOK.
I'M STUCK HERE!
THE LITTLE CRITTERS DONE STOLE MY OMA!


WE COULD SELL YOU A PORTALOK...
NO TIME! OMA'S AIR IS LOW AND THEY CHASED HER DARKSIDE!
OMA?
VASKES BASE
MY GYSHA.
A FELLER GITS LONELY.
DO ORKANDI GET LONELY?
OR HUNGRY?
THEY EAT ICESQUID. THEY'RE NOT **HUNTIN'** OMA. THEY'RE **COURTIN'** HER.
SEX DIMORPHS. TAKES AT LEAST 20 MALES TO MATE ONE FEMALE. THE BIGGER THE SIZE DIFFERENCE THE HOTTER THEY GET, RELATIVELY SPEAKING. NOTHING'S WARM ON THIS CUBE 'CEPT MY OOOOMA!
TELL ME MORE ORKANDI LORE.
DOMINANT SPECIES. NITRO/METHANE BREATHERS. TOUCH 'EM AND THEY MELT. BLIND. THEY FISH WITH SONAR AND ICE SPEARS.
COULD CHOP A SUIT TO SHREDS.
LOOK OUT FOR THE DORSAL CLAW. IT'S POISON!
WE FOUND 'EM A LAKE OF BLACK ICE.
GOOD SKATERS!
THERE'S THE GYSHA.


GYSHA? SHE'S A SUMO!
WE'LL BE SUSHI! FIRE A WARNING SHOT!
GUN'S FROZEN. TOO COLD FOR THE BATTERIES.
HIT YOUR RESCUE BEACON...
... AND GET INSIDE THEIR REACH WHILE THEIR SONAR IS CONFUSED.


GRAB AND GO!
TOO MUCH MASS!
NO TRACTION!
KICK!


OMA LANDED AT HER FRONT DOOR. MORE SPIN AND SHE'D BE IN A LOOPY ORBIT AROUND THIS ROCK.
A GLUTTONOUS GYRL DESERVES IT. AND THE BEASTS?
02
DEPRIVED OF THEIR PRIZE, THE ORKANDI RUSHED JO.
TOO HOT TO HANDLE.
NO LIFTOFF WITHOUT IGNITION, ANGEL JO.
OF COURSE, HER TEMPERATURE COOLED THEIR JETS.
OL BLESSES THEE WITH WISDOM, O KAPTYNSEN.
RON '95 FONTES
WHEN IN DOUBT, PUNT.
CAPTAIN FORTUNE

sex violence hairballs and one cool cat
adults only
published quarterly by Rip Off Press Inc.
a four-issue subscription to our mailorder catalog is $1
dealers and readers write to:
Rip Off Press Inc. POB 4686 Auburn CA 95604 or call 1-800-468-2669

“In the ’60s I was a hippie in San Francisco.”

Veteran comix publishers: Ron Turner of Last Gasp, Kathe “Mom” Todd of Rip Off, and Denis Kitchen of Kitchen Sink.

RIP OFF PRESS INC.

Rip Off Press has been around for more than a quarter-century, billing themselves as “World Suppliers of Laughter since 1969.” Founded by artists in San Francisco, ROP is one of the first — if not the first — creator-owned publishers. Fred and Kathe “Mom” Todd run their business from a modern light industry complex in Auburn, California. CAPTAIN FORTUNE creator Ron Fontes persuaded Kathe to take time out from her busy schedule to rap on the phone . . .

RON FONTES: *What’s with the “Mom” nickname?*

KATHE “MOM” TODD: Lemmesee — the “Mom” moniker is a long story. Years ago I was accustomed to sign ROP retail department correspondence with my first name, which I thought gave it a friendly tone. Too friendly, apparently.

One of our less-stable retail customers seized on the fact that he’d received a handwritten note (regarding our inability to locate the retail order he was inquiring about) signed by an apparent female, and built an entire fantasy life around it. The next letter I got from him commented on the size of his penis, described me as the sylph-like young beauty he imagined I looked (at this point I was a matronly, married mother of two in my mid-30s) and even claimed to have seen me walking down the street in his home town in Illinois. Whoa! I sent him a wake-up letter telling him to get a grip, but to no avail. He sent me several more mash notes and even went so far as to turn up in San Francisco and call me on the phone. He reached my husband, Fred, who told him in no uncertain terms to stay away from his wife.

A while later, the poor guy was committed to a mental institution. About that same time Fred and I had had to lay off all the help due to slow sales (the Head Shop distribution system had collapsed, and we had not yet gotten in synch with the relatively new Direct Market), so we were effectively a “Mom & Pop” company at that point. I decided to establish an identity for myself as “Mom,” on the theory that (a) I was in fact a mom and certainly plump enough to fit the stereotype; and (b) most people would have a positive, non-sexual response to the image. Let’s leave **Ed Kemperer** and **Norman Bates** out of this . . . This is strictly for the masses of the retail mail order customers.

I’ve continued to go by my real name in business transactions where I’m dealing with people on a professional level.

RON: *So, how did you get into comic books?*

MOM: I’ve always loved *some* comics. I learned to read on Disney’s ducks, and in high school I used to draw these little comic books and pass them around for the amusement of my friends. Not so much graphic narratives as the humor cartoon

KINKY KLITT ©1982 by Preston; UNDERGROUND CLASSICS cover ©1967 Mark Irons; PHILBERT DESANEX'S DREAMS ©1993 Gilbert Shelton; CAPTAIN FORTUNE ©1993 Ronald H. Fontes; FREAK BROTHERS and all other art accompanying this interview ©1995 Rip Off Press and/or the respective artists.

“One of our less-stable customers commented on the

genre. In the later ’60s I was a hippie in San Francisco, living in the Haight Ashbury, and used to get the original underground comix like FEDS ’N’ HEADS, SNATCH and the early ZAP COMIX at my local head shop.

RON: *Was that a job description?*

MOM: No, actually I was working as a telephone operator, and later as a clerk/typist, for the phone company. I never really liked working for them — I was in this block-long five-story building, where my boss’s boss would pass me in the hall with no look of recognition whatsoever. I was just one of the drones.

RON: *How did you feel about that?*

MOM: It made me feel insignificant. It was astoundingly boring, too. I was collecting a paycheck and I was working, but my immediate boss was a closet alcoholic. She was always very well-groomed, but she kept a bottle of whisky in her bottom desk drawer and I would spend every afternoon there doodling on my calendar because they’d run out of work for me and I’d say, “I finished what you told me to do this morning, may I have some more please?” But she’d be too blitzed out after lunch to deal with it. So she’d send me over to some other department to see if any of the people over there needed anything done. Basically, half the staff in my department was sitting around with nothing to do most of the day. Classic inefficiency.

RON: *How do you feel about your work now?*

MOM: I remember, like, 15 years ago at Rip Off Press, it was possible for me to go home on Friday having finished my work. That really has not happened in the last 10 years. There’s always something waiting for me to get the time to do it. It’s tolerable, but I’d be more upbeat about it if there were a sign my efforts were paying off. *(Laughter.)* The general tendency for everything we publish to sell less and less well has been kind of discouraging. It makes me question my ability to sell. It’s possible that external market forces may have a lot more to do with it than the quality of material or the wonderfulness of my ad copy, but —

RON: *But back in ’69, you were a hippie?*

MOM: I was a spare-time hippie. You know, smoking dope, going down to the local record shop, buying underground comics and just saying “Whoa, man, far out!” I was definitely primed for underground comics. And a few years later, I came back to the states after a year abroad and said, “I can’t stand this clerk/typist shit. I’m going to learn a trade.” So I went to City College to study printing technology and by the weirdest coincidence I ran into the guy I used to live with three years previously and he introduced me to **Houston White,** who lived in his building. Houston was working at Rip Off Press but he wanted to go back to Texas, and I was looking for a summer job that didn’t involve waiting tables. So he said, “Well, do you want my job?”

RON: *Wow! So you didn’t start Rip Off Press?*

MOM: Oh no. Fred and **Gilbert Shelton** and **Jack Jackson** and **Dave Moriaty** started Rip Off Press. And six years later I showed up for a summer job. At that point, Fred and his ex-wife were still sort of tailing off and I was busy with other things, but by the end of the year we were dating and have been pretty much going steady ever since.

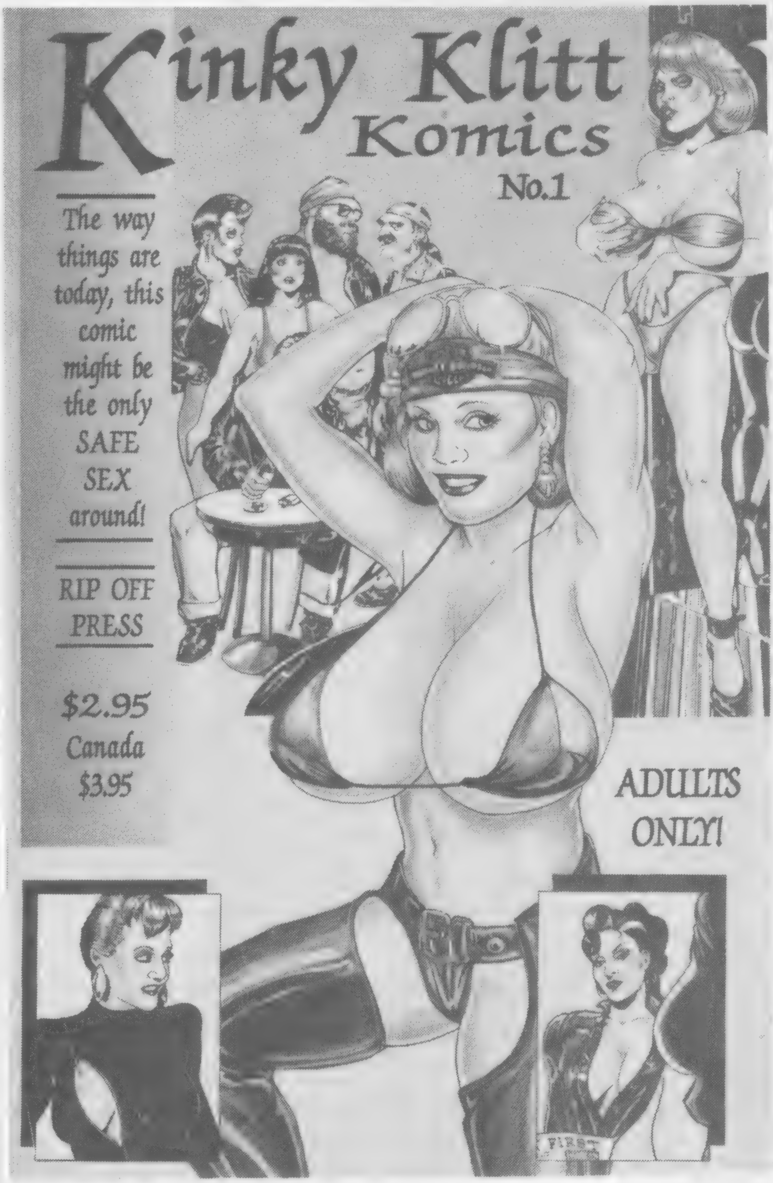
RON: *I guess.*

MOM: It’s like 20 years now.

RON: *Don’t you have kids?*

MOM: Yeah, we have kids. Every time I’d get pregnant, Fred would announce further layoffs.

RON: (Laughter.) *Was he planning on*


Kinky Klitt Komics
No.1
The way things are today, this comic might be the only SAFE SEX around!
RIP OFF PRESS
$2.95
Canada $3.95
ADULTS ONLY!
FIRST

size of his penis. Whoa! I sent him a wake-up letter.”

employing the kids or just —

MOM: He’d say, “I see you’re getting ready to drop a kid here, Kathe. So I’ll lay off these two people and you can do their jobs.” But seriously, I think it had something to do with starting a family right after **Ronald Reagan** was elected president.

RON: *That’s very optimistic of you.*

MOM: Well, I hadn’t planned it that way. Fred was nearly 40 and I was 32 so the clock was ticking. Anyway I hadn’t thought there was any chance that **Ronald Reagan** would actually be elected president. He was a broken-down movie actor, for Christ’s sake. His biggest achievement was being the host of DEATH VALLEY DAYS (I tried really hard to ignore his being governor of California for eight years . . .). When was that, the ’50s?

RON: *Yes, some time when we were kids, I think. How many kids do you have?*

MOM: We have a daughter, Susan, who’s 14. She worked with us as a shipping clerk last summer. Turned out to be real good at the job, too. I think we’ll have her back next summer.

My son Jamey is 11, going on 12, and kind of a mad scientist. Sits up until one in the morning soldering stuff in his bedroom when he’s supposed to be asleep. He’s made a solemn promise to Fred never to make nitroglycerin and keep it in the refrigerator.

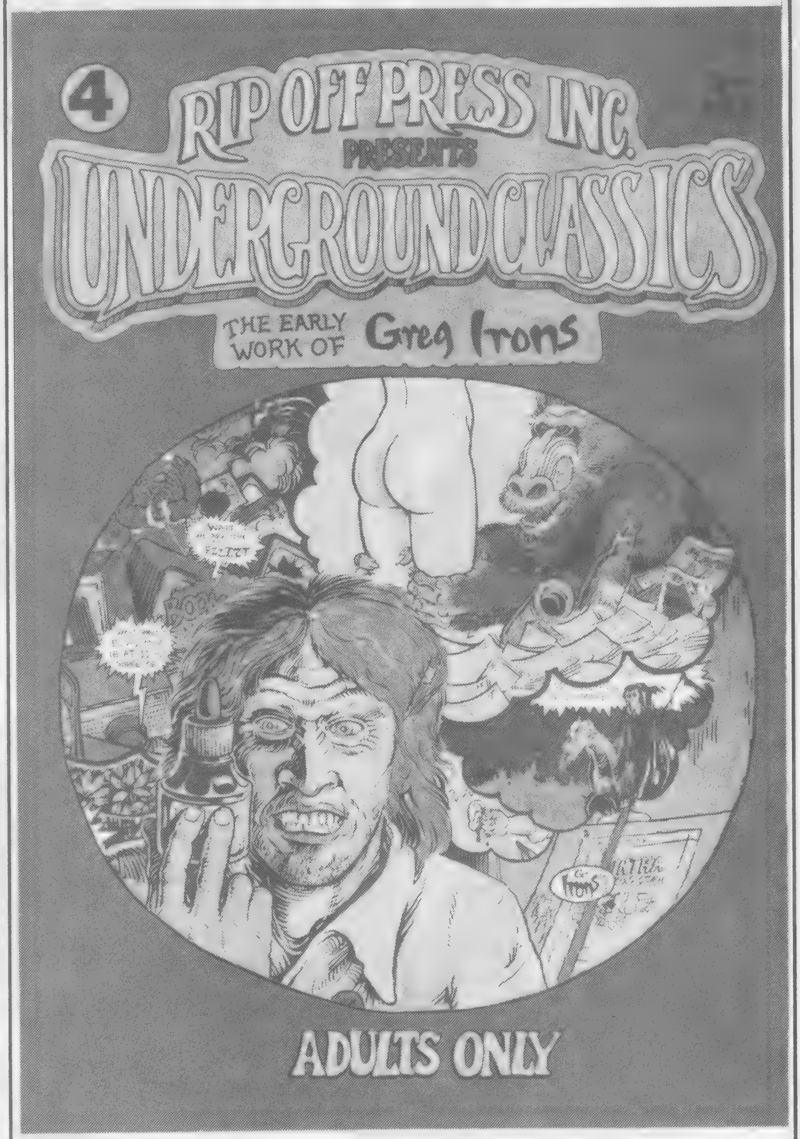
RON: *Maybe you ought to get all kinds of general agreements about mad scientist stuff. Do you have any other kids?*

MOM: Just the two. We never really wanted more than that, especially considering the economy and how late we got started.

RON: *I guess that would’ve meant more people fired.*

MOM: Ha. We had a pretty good crew for awhile. We had a shipping clerk, **Danny Gregory**, who worked for us for about three years. He and his sexy wife **Stacia Berry** used to come down and work our booth at the San Diego Con every year — the guys were lined up three deep to get a look at her in her thigh boots and rubber dress! In the front office, **Joyce Armor** was doing the invoicing, placing stock orders and stuff like that. She used to be a writer for television and actually gets residual checks every time they run certain episodes of shows like the LOVE BOAT and WKRP. Now she’s trying to write the Great American Novel, or at least the Pays-Decent-Money American Novel.

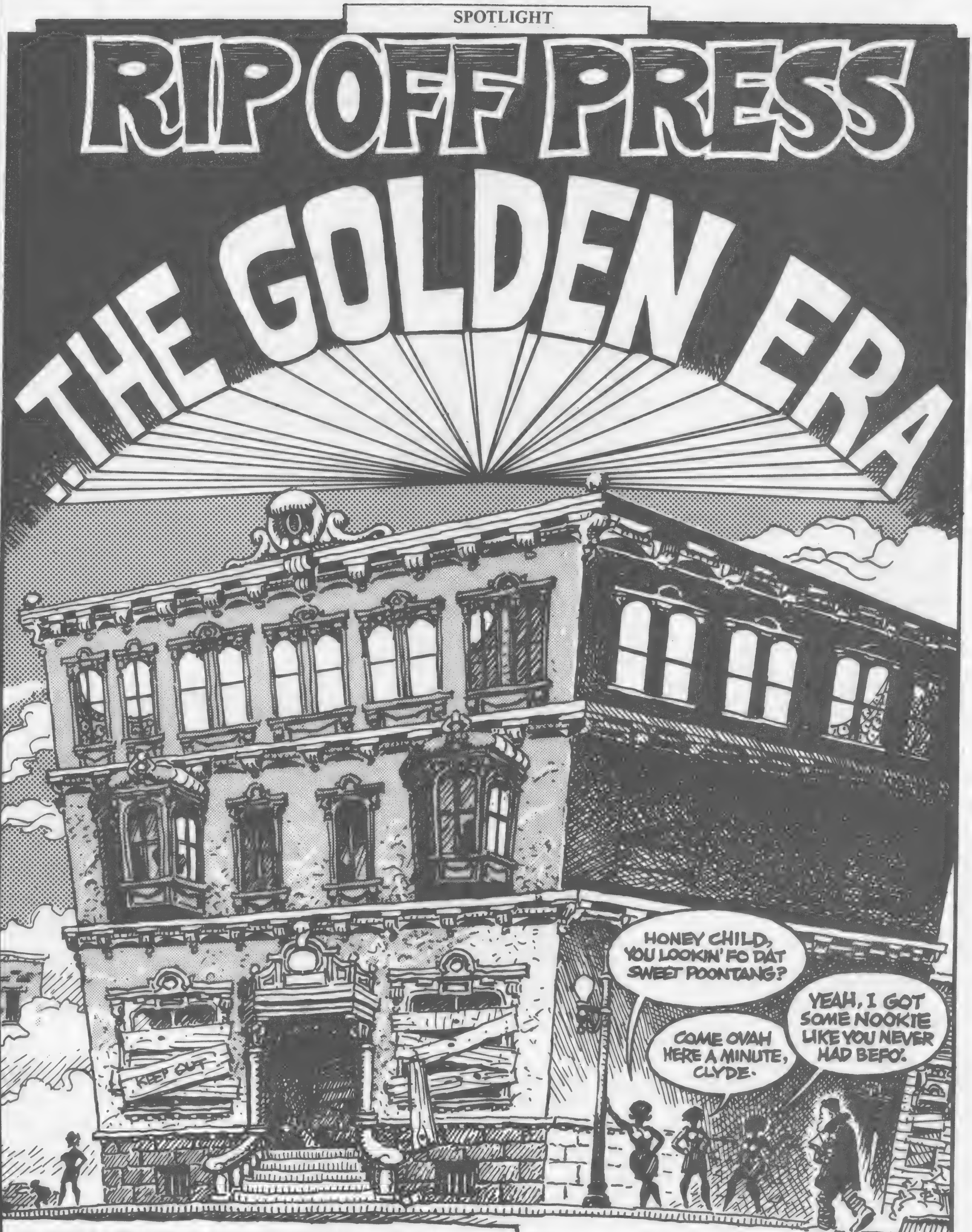
RON: *It’d have to, or it wouldn’t be American.*



MOM: She needed a day job, so she talked her way into coming to work for us. It sounded really amusing to her being in the dirty comic-book business. We laid her, Danny and Stacia all off in October of ’93. It just reached the point where we couldn’t make the payroll on a regular basis. It’s always more efficient, anyhow, when it’s just me and Fred. He and I have been Mom-and-Popping it on and off ever since ’83.

RON: *How was Rip Off Press founded?*

MOM: All these guys had been sort of hanging around together at the University of Texas in the early ’60s and had separately made their way out to San Francisco in ’66, ’67, ’68, in that general area. And somehow they all came together at the end of ’68 and **Dave Moriaty**, who’s a really crazed character, an original thinker for sure, said, “Let’s buy a printing press and rule the world!” “Cool, yeah, let’s do that.” Actually that was ’69, so they probably said, “Far out,” not “cool.” So they bought this old Davidson printing press, small format but big enough to print comic book covers on. Of course, nobody was exactly an expert press operator, but they didn’t figure that was an impediment — learn while you earn — and they got this space in the old Mowry’s Opera House, down in the Western Addition of San Francisco.


RIP OFF PRESS
THE GOLDEN ERA
KEEP OUT
HONEY CHILD, YOU LOOKIN' FO DAT SWEET POONTANG?
COME OVAH HERE A MINUTE, CLYDE.
YEAH, I GOT SOME NOOKIE LIKE YOU NEVER HAD BEFO'.
ONCE A GRAND EDIFICE, URBAN RENEWAL HAS MOWREY'S OPERA HOUSE SLATED FOR DEMOLITION — ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. BUT UNTIL THE BULLDOZERS ROLL, FREAKS INHABIT MOWREY'S LOFT AND HOOKERS PROWL THE STREETS BELOW.

"It's the Curse of the Universal Deal."

I guess that had been some grand, palatial place, you know, 70 or 80 years previously. It had even been used as an emergency City Hall when the real one's rotunda collapsed in the '06 quake. But it had really gone downhill a lot, along with the rest of the neighborhood, by the '60s. The second floor was this huge space where you paid $25 a month and you got a key to the space and could do anything you wanted in there that the other tenants would let you get away with.

So they parked their printing press next to **Don Donahue**, who was turning out *SNATCH COMIX* on a press of his own. I guess it was either Don or the Print Mint people who printed the first **R. Crumb** comics that sort of launched the whole San Francisco underground thing.

RON: *Wow.*

MOM: So Rip Off Press was founded January 17, 1969.

RON: *You guys are 25 now?*

MOM: 26, as of last January.

RON: *How long is that in dog years?*

MOM: A long, long time.

RON: *So then they started printing out of this loft. And how did they sell 'em?*

MOM: According to Fred, they got the Family Dog's mailing list and used it as a prospect list. They didn't really have much of a business structure at that point. Besides being a student at San Francisco Art Institute for awhile, Fred had been a computer professional prior to that. He'd been one of those guys in a suit and tie who flies in to tell you what to do when your room-sized computer stops operating.

Fred was supposed to be the business head for the operation, mostly by default. Dave supplied the manic energy. Of course, Gilbert and Jack were both underground cartoonists.

RON: *Yeah, really good ones. The best. So Fred was supposed to be the straight guy in that thing, huh? Is Fred still the business guy?*

MOM: I haven't seen him in a suit and tie for the past 20 years, but yeah. Although, I'm kind of a business gal. I attended the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, and have a lot of art-type background. But I also have a fairly heavy business background and I'm not averse to doing the kinds of boring clerical work that are required to make a publishing business operate. I think that, of the successful cartoonists out there, you could probably say that **Dave Sim** and maybe one or two others are capable of doing that. But mostly, the two sorts of operation are sort of incompatible.

RON: *Art and business, you mean?*

MOM: Yeah, if you're an artist, you don't have the patience for sending out 27 invoices in triplicate and following up to make sure you get paid.

RON: *No!* (Laughter.) *Did you learn all this just being there?*

MOM: Well, I had worked as a clerk/typist for several years.

RON: *Oh yeah, for the phone company. You said telephone operator and clerk/typist?*

MOM: I've been a telephone operator, a clerk/typist, a market researcher, a photo retoucher, an encyclopedia peddler . . .

RON: *You learned business from hands-on experience.*

MOM: Oh, definitely! I didn't go to business school. My college degree, such as it is, is in printing technology, which has certainly stood me in good stead in the publishing business. Actually, I even operated a press at Rip Off Press for a time.

RON: *Do you guys print your own comic books?*

MOM: Not for a long time. We used to, prior to about 1972/3. The first few years of the company, they were operating as a commercial printer. They printed a lot of the Avalon Ballroom rock posters, ads for love-ins, things like that.

RON: *Copies of those posters go for a $100 a pop.*

MOM: Oh, right. But, of course, that's for the first printings.

RON: *I used to have one. It was a butterfly woman.*

MOM: Fred just sold a whole bunch of them, most of them second and third printings, for $5 apiece.

RON: *You guys could probably scalp some yuppies. So you did posters and stuff. How did they start the comic books, since this is COMICS INTERVIEW. I mean since they were doing posters and commercial type printing things, did they start doing comic books on the side?*

MOM: Well, the point of establishing a company was that Jack wanted to get his GOD NOSE comics back in print. And Gilbert wanted to reprint FEDS 'N' HEADS and H-BOMB FUNNIES, and start publishing FREAK BROTHERS material. The commercial jobs just helped keep the press busy in between print runs. They would do the covers themselves and get the guts printed out. Then for awhile they had their own web press, not that anybody knew how to keep that running. Nor that they could get newsprint to print on, either. You pretty much have to be a newspaper printer to get newsprint on a regular basis.

RON: *Just hoisting those rolls around*—

MOM: Supply keeps fluctuating. Anyway, in 1972, when they were in the building on 17th Street where the company was to be for about 17 years, the Sheriff came and took the web press away.

RON: *Why?*

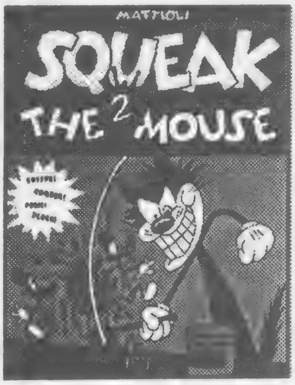
RIP OFF PRESS
INC.
NEW!

MOM: Because they hadn't made a payment, and could get along without it. Everybody breathed a sigh of relief. They reorganized the company, which had started as a partnership, into a corporation in 1972 with Fred as the president, and he fired all the printing staff—

RON: *Didn't know what they were doing!*

MOM: Jack went back to Texas. Dave went back to Texas. And for awhile it was Fred and Gilbert standing there with this 9,000 square foot building saying "Hmm, what do we do now?" So what they did

“Movie deal: Dave Sheridan got $35,000 in cash and several



was bring out another FREAK BROTHERS comic. That was the year that FREAK BROTHERS #2 came out for the first time.

RON: *You keep everything in print, right?*

MOM: Well, the stuff that's worth reprinting, we do. For a long time there, they kind of went from print-run to print-run, you know, you print the comic, then you call everybody up and say, “Hey, I've got this, you want to buy some?” And they'd sell enough to get enough money to print some more. So it went. And sometimes things would be out of print for a while. Sometimes they wouldn't be able to get the newsprint. There was one issue that was printed on pink newsprint —

RON: *Oh, like for advertising inserts. Pink newsprint. Is that valuable now?*

MOM: Oh yeah. It's a collector's item. Back about '75 or '76, we found about 5,000 copies of the pink guts in the warehouse, had them bound up as a special collector's edition at five bucks. We thought, “Oh, boy, we're really making a killing here.” But of course, now if you could find one of those, I'm sure it's worth a lot more than $5.

RON: *You guys don't collect comics, do you?*

MOM: Not exactly. Fred has a collection. He doesn't actively seek to add to it, although he has been known to go out and get his hands on copies of things that he was missing. There's a big tendency when you're a publisher and you're sitting on 10,000 copies of something to believe that you're never going to run out. And then you just sort of accidentally sell the very last one and get left without even a file copy.

RON: *Oh! That's true. They didn't even do that at Marvel. Believe it or not. No file copies.*

MOM: Well, that's the thing. You just can't conceive that you're ever actually going to run out of them, and the next thing you know somebody says, “Hey, you remember that thing you did ten years ago? Is this particular piece in it?” and you say, “I don't know! I haven't seen one in five years.”

RON: *So, do you go back and buy your own stuff at Cons ?*

MOM: It's happened. People are always coming up to Fred wanting to know, how can I tell if this is the first printing of FREAK BROTHERS #1, and he was standing there at the pressman's elbow when those things came off, and he can't tell. Because basically, there's no difference between the first printing and the second printing of that comic, which has been through probably 20 or 30 printings since 1971.

RON: *And you don't indicate that inside or anything?*

MOM: Well —

RON: *Nothing changes?*

MOM: It's so much easier if you just do a straight reprint without any changes. The thing that mostly changes is somebody says, “Oh, this cover sep sucks rocks, let's correct it; or, let's put the cover price up from 50¢ to 65¢, from 65¢ to 75¢, from 75¢ to a dollar.” During the mid-'70s I'm sure you remember inflation was outrageous. So there were a lot of price hikes during that period.

art spiegelman
MAUS

RON: *Sure, I was just thinking back to eating soybean “meat.”*

MOM: Comics were, I think, 60 cents was the correct cover price when I first came to work for Rip Off Press. And by 1980, five years later, they were a dollar and a half.

RON: *Your policy is that if something is good and sells, then you guys keep it in print, up to 30 printings. You don't own any of these —*

MOM: With one exception. In 1979, the Universal Studios movie deal occasioned a transfer of the FREAK BROTHERS movie rights from Gilbert to the corporation. Since Gilbert owns half of the corporation, it wasn't much of a divestment. The main thing that happened at that point was that they had to kind of consolidate the ownership of the material so its title wasn't clouded, and that meant paying off anybody who had a substantial interest in it. **Dave Sheridan** came away with around $35,000 in cash and several weeks of going to Hollywood and snorting cocaine as a script consultant. That movie deal may have been what ruined Dave's health for him, 'cause he died of cancer only two or three years later.

RON: *Oh my! Yow!*

MOM: When I think on it, it seems to me as though, really Rip Off Press came off the best out of that deal. Well, I guess Gilbert came out it okay. I mean he was able to leave the country and get out from under all his responsibilities, but of two other people in the movie deal, one of them died of cancer in three years and the other one took his earnings from being the agent on the deal, bought himself a sailboat, sailed off to Hawaii, got run over by a car and lost a leg.

RON: *This is the FREAK BROTHERS curse?*

MOM: It's the Curse of the Universal Deal.

RON: *Was that going to live action or a cartoon?*

MOM: It was gonna be live action, and they actually had a first draft script, which was supposed to have **George Carlin** and who the hell else —

RON: *Cheech and Chong maybe?*

MOM: That little old lady who, oh, she was in WHERE'S POPPA? She had quite an acting career right up to the time she died. She was the female lead in HAROLD AND MAUDE.

RON: *Oh, I love that movie, but I can't think of her name. Teeny, help! Maude in HAROLD AND MAUDE?*

JUSTINE: **Ruth Gordon.**

RON: *Ruth Gordon.*

weeks snorting coke as a Hollywood script consultant?”

MOM: Ruth Gordon, right. They really wanted to get **Ruth Gordon** for the part of the old lady in this movie, which didn't seem to have all that much to do with the FREAK BROTHERS. There was all this geriatric sex in it and the inevitable San Francisco chase scene.

RON: *Of course, it's a movie.*

MOM: Fat Freddy's being pursued by the cops down the cable car tracks to the Bay on a skateboard or something. Or all three of them on the floor of somebody's condo in Sausalito sniffing up this enormous line of cocaine, that kind of thing. I probably would not have liked this movie had it actually been made. On the other hand, it might have made a big difference to us in the early '80s, with the mass-market exposure counteracting what the **Reagan** crew did to our distribution. What happened instead was Universal sat on the rights for five years, and didn't make the movie. They paid us a quarter of a million dollars though, so I can't say that we got screwed.

RON: *No.*

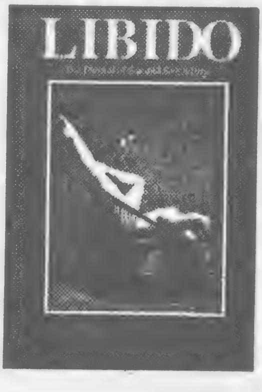
MOM: On the other hand, things got kind of disappointing after that. **Ronald Reagan** and the religious right decided that the whole problem with the country was that people were allowed to buy roach clips and rolling papers, and if they could just put a stop to that everything would straighten out. So they closed all the head shops and that was our distribution.

RON: *Yow! So you went into catalogs only?*

MOM: Oh, there'd always been a Rip Off Press retail catalog. In fact my job when I first got there was the retail fulfillment, and I gradually expanded. *(Sigh.)* In more ways than one . . .

RON: *I take it your sales are primarily through the catalog?*

MOM: I wouldn't say *most* of our sales are through our catalog, but it is certainly about the only segment of our economic picture that's on a rising curve. I publish a 56-page mail-order catalog quarterly, packed full of everything I can get my hands on that I think my audience will appreciate. We have about 14,000 people on our mailing list and they run the gamut from horny prison inmates and college students to doctors, lawyers and college professors. The mix of stuff in the catalog sort of reflects this eclectic spread of interests.



RON: *How can the interested reader get your catalog?*

MOM: To get the mail order catalog, you should be over 18 (due to the adult material, of which there is more and more due to popular demand). Send a buck to: Rip Off Press, POB 4686, Auburn, California 95604. $3 US for airmail postage outside the US and Canada.

RON: *You also sell to comics shops?*

MOM: Rip Off Press has always sold direct to comics shops, though of course when we started out there hardly were any. The California chain Comics & Comix was one of the first groups of such specialty shops to spring up, back when the Direct Market was just getting started. They moved a huge quantity of our titles through their several stores, buying from us at distributor discount and redistributing the comix among the various stores. It's sad to see them these days. They might as well call themselves “Comics & Comics” because there is no longer any underground or even much “alternative” material in most of their stores. There's one right across from the campus of Sierra College in Rocklin, and the pimply-faced kid at the counter there looked at me like I was speaking Urdu when I asked him where the undergrounds were.

We currently have about fifty shops that order from us direct, either once or twice a year or as frequently as once a month. We offer a sliding discount scale of 40-60% off cover on our own titles (depending on quantity ordered) and also distribute a lot of new and backlist titles from other publishers, such as CHERRY, XXXENOPHILE, OMAHA, HATE, ZAP, HORNY BIKER SLUTS, etc. — whatever's popular enough to be in demand. I've also started mailing monthly promo packages to a list of 500 stores, with the main intent of getting them to buy our products through their regular distributors. We do stand by, though, to work directly with any store that feels they can't get the service they want from whoever is currently supplying them.

The Tijuana Bible

RON: *Let's go back to the past.*

MOM: I worked for Rip Off Press from June '75 to March of '77, and then graduated from college and went to work in the printing business for a while, came back to the company in '79. What happened was, we bought a house.

RON: *You and Fred?*

MOM: Yeah. We were wanting to start a family and I wasn't making enough money in the printing business, 'cause I was only working part-time.

RON: *What did you do there?*

MOM: In the printing business? Oh, prepress, bindery, stuff like that. Stripping, paste-up, camera work.

RON: *I've done all that. Makes your fingers smell good.*

MOM: Well, I like it better than operating a press. I really hate that printer's ink all over the place and the solvents and everything.

RON: *The rhythm drives me nuts after a while, hearing it go ka-chung, ka-chung.*

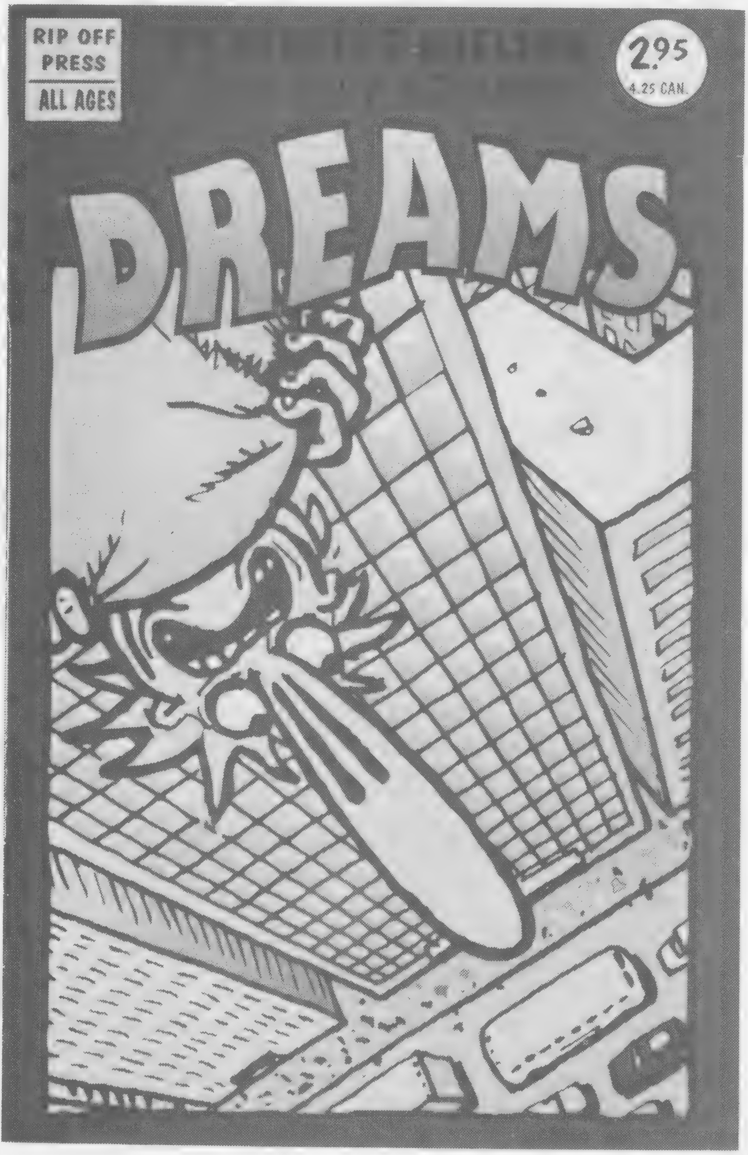
MOM: Oh, I don't mind chuketa-chuketa. It's the rip, tear, screech that I can't stand when the sheets misfeed and smash the blanket and you know you're looking at washing up the press and spending the next 45 minutes trying to get back where you were before the mishap. I was never what you could call a super-

"GIVE ME LIBERTY — we inciner-

skilled press operator, always kind of flying by the seat of my pants. I had the training but not the years and years of experience that you need to get good at that.

RON: *Yeah. So if this company was started by a bunch of artists basically, and you're an artist, too, than it's like you guys are way ahead on this creator's rights stuff, yes?*

MOM: Oh, yeah. It kind of irks me that other people are always being given the credit for having published the first graphic novel or pioneered creator's rights as if we somehow didn't count, we weren't real. While I admit we didn't join the rest of the comics industry until the mid-'80s and we were always kind of operating outside of the way the other comics publishers did things, I think our circulation was significant enough that we really have to be considered to have been part of the industry in some way and ought to be given more credit for having been among the first to publish creator-owned comic books. Diamond Comic Distributors actually managed to do a feature on the history of the comic-book industry in one of their recent publications, without even mentioning us — or any of the other underground publishers — once!



We may not have published the first graphic novel, but I think that the 1977 THOROUGHLY RIPPED was pretty close to being a graphic novel. That had the FREAK BROTHERS' "$49.95 San Francisco to New York Bus" story in it, although there were some other strips in it too. Come to think of it, we published GIVE ME LIBERTY in '76. If that's not a graphic novel, I don't know what is. And Jack Jackson's 1980 COMANCHE MOON, which we co-published with Last Gasp, is certainly one of the earliest.

RON: *You guys still have that?*

MOM: I've got the original art, but I don't think I have any copies of the book. That was one of the things that got away from us. We worked on that project to put it out for the big Bicentennial celebration and **Willy Murphy**, who was one of the people on the project, died unexpectedly over the weekend in February of '76. That was the Washington holiday weekend. He went home on Friday saying, "Oh, I feel rotten. I've got a cold." And Tuesday, morning somebody called me up to tell me that he'd died of pneumonia. He was, I think, 42 years old. But it just snuck up on him. He lived by himself. And when you live by yourself, by the time you realize you're sick enough to go to the hospital, you're too sick to get there yourself. If you're running a high fever, your brain's not functioning properly.

RON: *You have very little reality check.*

MOM: Right. No doubt that's the main reason why married people live longer. So it was Willy dying in the middle of the project that really set everybody else back. We eventually got **Gary Hallgren** in to finish up Willy's part of the job. But the thing came out late in '76, and by then I think the whole country had had Bicentennial out the yazoo, so the demand was less than we'd anticipated. That was before the direct-market days, and I think **Phil Seuling** was just starting to invent the direct market at that point. We didn't have any pre-pub orders on the book to tell us how many to print, and we overprinted by a factor of 100% so during the cold winters that followed we bought a wood stove and burned up several cases of GIVE ME LIBERTY books, well, the comics anyhow. The trade paperback actually sold out.

RON: *At least they served some useful purpose.*

MOM: We incinerated a lot of those comics to keep warm. The building was a concrete tilt-up with 20-foot ceilings, a leaky roof, no insulation and no central heat. It was like a meat locker in there all winter, even though it doesn't get all that

ated a lot of those comics to keep warm.”

cold in San Francisco.

RON: *That's justifiable. Now, let's see. You said you worked to help put together a project. I mean, you're the editor of Rip Off Press? Editor-in-Chief?*

MOM: Yeah, Gilbert used to be the Editor-in-Chief. And when he took off for Spain in '79, burnt out by the pressures of the movie deal, we had to kind of fill in for him. He came back again in '82, and stayed until '85. February of '85, he took off and has not been back in the country as a resident since then.

RON: *So he lives in Spain?*

MOM: He lives in France. He and his wife have got a condo and also a studio/ storefront in Paris.

RON: *In Paris, wow!*

MOM: So at that point, I pretty much by default became the Editor-in-Chief. Fred was usually too busy with the computers to do that much editorially. He's talked to artists and done the occasional deal or he's come up with ideas, gotten things started. But all of the picky little work falls to me. And my pre-press background makes it easy for me to handle a whole project from start to finish. I negotiate and write the contracts with the artist, tell him or her what I need in the way of artwork, sometimes I execute the covers —

RON: *You sometimes execute the covers? Which ones?*

MOM: Oh, I did the PHILBERT DESANEX' DREAMS cover, and I've done some of the UNDERGROUND CLASSICS covers. In several of the UNDERGROUND CLASSICS cases we were creating a cover by an artist who'd been dead for years.

RON: *How did you do that?*

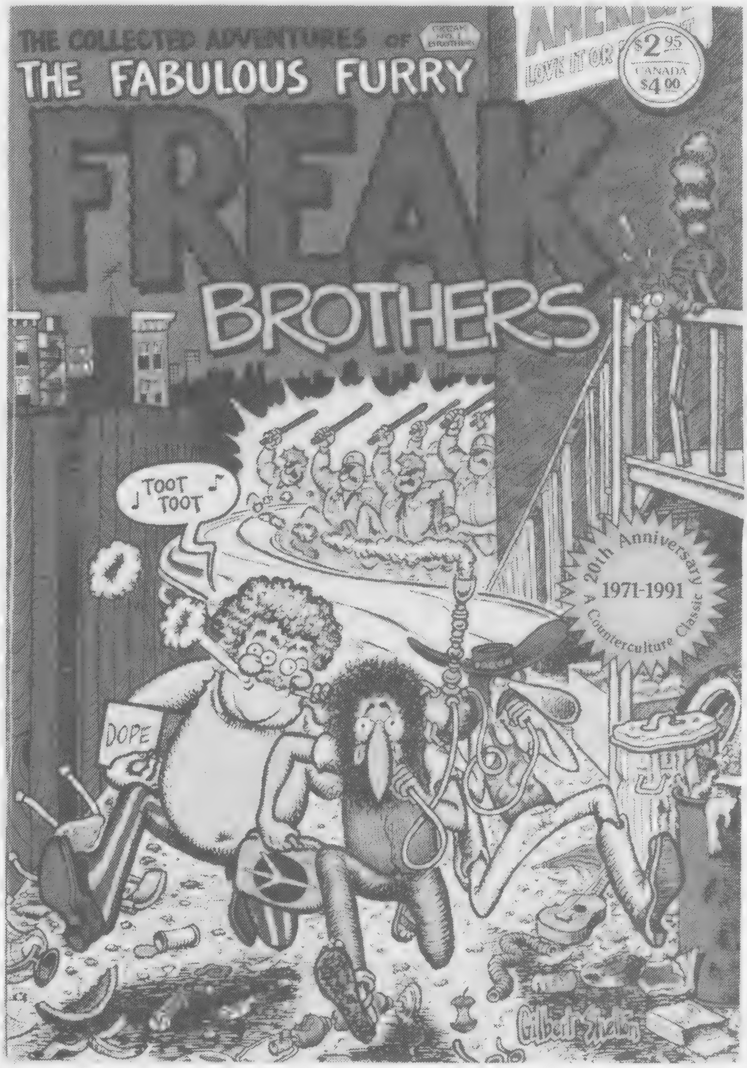
MOM: You just pick somebody's artwork out of the inside and incorporate it into a cover design and lay some color on it.

RON: *So, um, you were saying Fred does computer stuff. Is the mighty Rip Off empire run by computer?*

MOM: Pretty much.

RON: *What does Fred do?*

MOM: One of the things we got in '79 with the movie money, besides a year's supply of FREAK BROTHERS comics, was a Dynabyte microcomputer system. It's a CP/M system with, I don't know, something like 64K RAM, which was a big deal at that point, probably spent $15,000 for the system including a daisy wheel printer. It didn't even have a hard drive. Fred immediately started tweaking the software and has since been in charge of completely overhauling the system and converting it over to IBM clones. Right now we have six IBM clones hooked up in a network around the shop. He's built most of them himself, from component parts. And he's written all of the order-entry software and the accounting software — all that is Fred's work. He spends a lot of his time on accounting or bookkeeping-type functions, or writing software for doing same.



RON: *He's still the business guy.*

MOM: Yeah, still a business guy. Well, neither he nor I have any illusions about our ability to make a living as professional artists. We still have the sensibility, but there's too many people out there who're dynamite.

RON: *And well I know that. I feel so — nothing.*

MOM: Really? I would've thought you were one of the dynamite people, too.

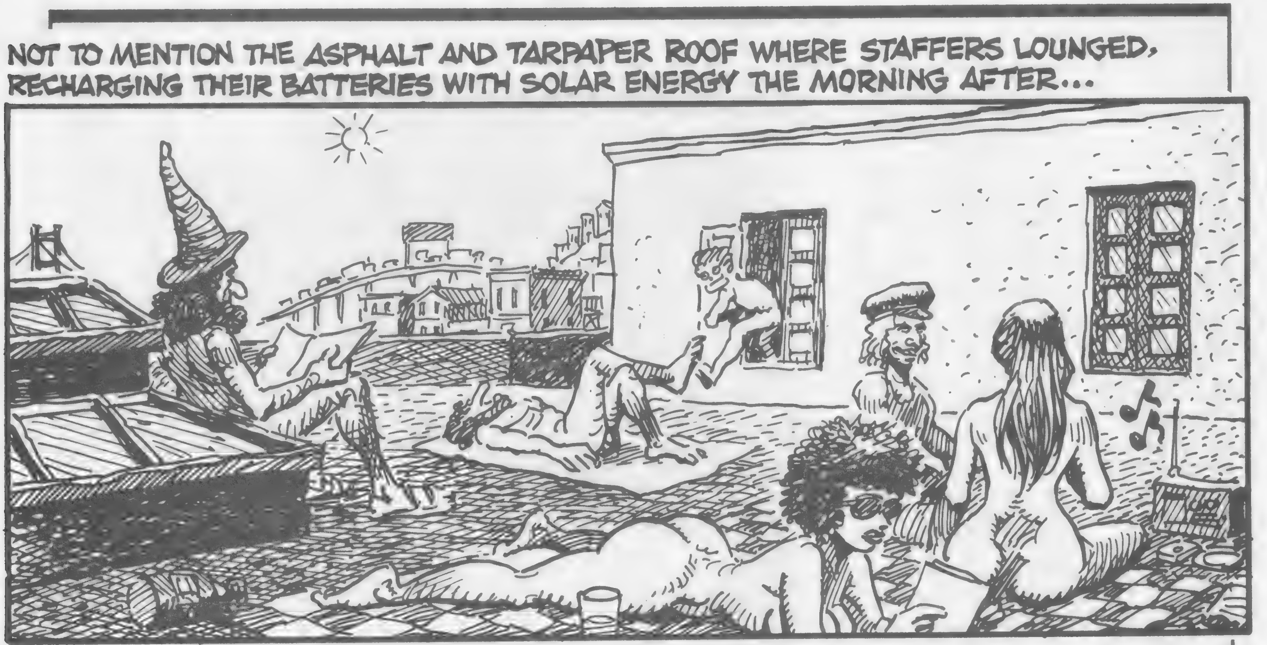
RON: *Well, if I ever think so, then I'll turn bad. I want to use my powers for good, and as long as I've got Teeny in there going, "You know, that looks a little crooked," or "What's that supposed to be?" I'll never get a big head. Back to you, though, Fred's still the business guy, like when you started. And you are the, um, creative manager, I suppose. I'm just trying to figure out what you guys do. Your functions sort of overlap?*

MOM: To a certain extent. Although either one of us would be lost without the other.

RON: *Yeah, the Gestalt Unit.*

MOM: Well, I know you work with your wife, so you've got an appreciation of

“We’re down to the point where it’s a miracle if


NOT TO MENTION THE ASPHALT AND TARPAPER ROOF WHERE STAFFERS LOUNGED, RECHARGING THEIR BATTERIES WITH SOLAR ENERGY THE MORNING AFTER...

what that’s like to be together all the time.

RON: *This is what single people don’t know. It becomes telepathy after a while. You don’t have to say something, they just know it.*

MOM: Uh, huh. Oh, yeah. I know that well. I’m also in charge of our publicity and marketing effort. That’s a large part of what I do. And creation of the retail catalog. I am, in essence, all of the sections of the retail Mail Order operation rolled into one. I seek out and obtain new merchandise for the catalog and decide what to drop.

RON: *How do you do that?*

MOM: I’m on the mail list of all of the underground and alternative comic publishers. They send me flyers and I say, “Send me a copy of this, I want to put it in the catalog.” Actually what works best is if the publisher just sends me a sample right off the bat. I scan cover images or product photos into the computer and create the catalog on Quark Express. I execute the covers. Send out the color for film, which proved to be an incredible hardship last time. It usually isn’t, but there’s not much choice in desktop service bureaus in a town the size of Auburn (pop. 9,000). After sending the catalog to press I massage the mail list, take names out, put names in, update people’s addresses, run the pre-sort software, print the labels, put the labels on the catalogs, bundle the catalogs, take them in sacks to the post office — Fred invoices the orders when they come in and I pack them up and ship them out.

RON: *What about the thousands of workers you have in your empire?*

MOM: The thousands of workers we have in our empire is currently me and Fred. It’s basically a result of the compression of the comic-book marketplace. You know, we used to put X amount of effort into publishing a comic and sell maybe 5, 10, 15, 20 thousand of them and reap some profit for our efforts and put this profit into other aspects of the company or a new publication. It’s not like we’ve ever been paying ourselves a big salary and driving a Mercedes or anything, for God’s sake. But for the last few years, the amount of money you get back from the same amount of effort has gotten smaller and smaller and smaller, until we’re down to the point where it’s really a miracle if something sells enough copies to pay the fuckin’ print bill, let alone the overhead.

RON: *And just at a rough guess, let me say, would you think that this is because certain large, tights-wearing companies are flooding the market?*

MOM: That’s a remote possibility. Plus the fact that the retailers are reeling from the fluctuations and they’ve been sent into greed-driven speculation and then been bitten when the speculation fell through, and say “God, what could I possibly do to cut my orders down? Well, there’s all these small press things that don’t sell very well.”

RON: *“So I can lose all my money on the other stuff.” Yeah, I was just told that Marvel’s cutting 40/50 titles, oh, a big break for them.*

MOM: I guess that would be their poor-sellers, the ones that only do about 50,000 copies.

Gary Hallgren and Gilbert Shelton at work on the pingpong table in the art studio.

something sells enough to pay the fuckin' print bill.”

The MOTHER'S OATS team of Dave Sheridan and Fred Schrier.

RON: *Yeah. Not enough for their greedy little heads. Speaking of the comics market, are you doing okay in the current market or is this hurting you a lot?*

MOM: Oh, for sure! It's really, really getting hard to make a living, and of course for the comics artists, with the possible exception of Gilbert and **Paul Mavrides,** I don't think anybody we're publishing *can* make a living doing black-and-white comics. Out of all the people in black-and-white comics generally, maybe **Peter Bagge**, the **Hernandez Brothers**, very few others are making a living. I guess **Dave Sim** makes a living, but of course he's taking the publisher's percentage so that all the profit his books generate is going right to him and **Gerhard**.

It's definitely not like we're fatcats sitting around growing rich off the blood of the workers. We're working our asses off 50 or 60 hours a week and getting paid what amounts to burger-flipping wages for it.

RON: *Well, I can relate to that.* (Laughter.) *I gave up trying to get rich a long time ago. I just thought, eh, impossible dream. So, um, if you're not being a fatcat sucking the blood off 'em, do you think your sales are restricted because your stuff is underground? Because it's "countercultural"?*

MOM: It's certainly possible. These things used to sell 10,000 copies, and I think it's possible that some of the people who bought them 10 or 15 years ago don't go to comics shops and therefore they've stopped buying comics. They never were interested in superhero comics, and since it's their perception that there's nothing *but* superhero comics in comic shops, they don't ever bother to go to them. Most of the mall stores don't carry undergrounds, you know the places where people just walking by might stop and see, they're afraid of negative feedback from mommy-types, perhaps. I don't know.

RON: *Well, how about comics shops being busted?*

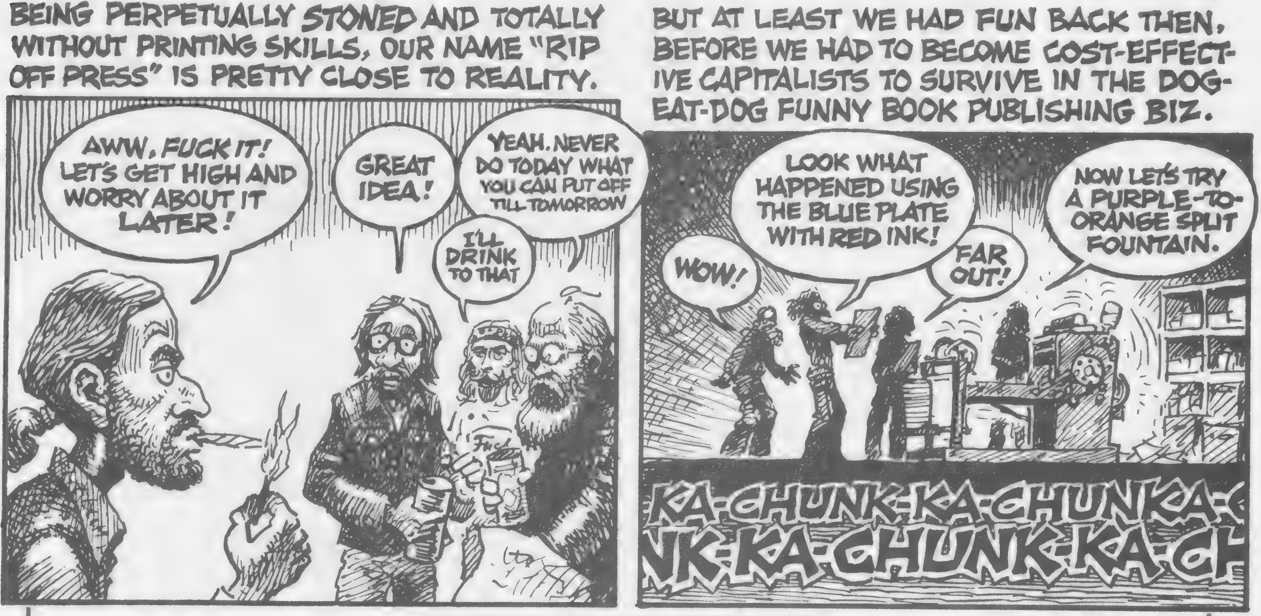
MOM: Yeah, well, it's something you have to watch out for. I probably wouldn't publish as much adult-type material as I do if it wasn't for the fact that it sells better than most of the other stuff. You know, like we had that DIK SKYCAP comic that was hilarious. It was cute, it was funny in an adult sort of way without being offensive, and it didn't sell enough to cover the cost of the print run. I don't think there's enough support among the retailers for non-mainstream humorous material.

RON: *They could probably get a different kind of customer in the store if they could figure out how to promote it without getting the shop busted.*

MOM: It's kind of a vicious circle. Fans and retailers want stuff to come out regularly or it's not worth their trouble to support it, and nobody who's writing, pencilling, inking and lettering his own comic can afford to do it full time when an issue sells under 3,000 copies. So you maybe get one or two issues a year.

RON: *I was going to ask you about Rip Off stuff, I mean you don't just do reprints. You do new material, like you have DEMI THE DEMONESS, which started coming out last year.*

MOM: Right, there's a new issue of DEMI which should be on the stands by the time this is read. **Steve Crompton's**


BEING PERPETUALLY STONED AND TOTALLY WITHOUT PRINTING SKILLS, OUR NAME "RIP OFF PRESS" IS PRETTY CLOSE TO REALITY.
AWW, FUCK IT! LET'S GET HIGH AND WORRY ABOUT IT LATER!
GREAT IDEA!
YEAH. NEVER DO TODAY WHAT YOU CAN PUT OFF TILL TOMORROW
I'LL DRINK TO THAT
BUT AT LEAST WE HAD FUN BACK THEN, BEFORE WE HAD TO BECOME COST-EFFECTIVE CAPITALISTS TO SURVIVE IN THE DOG-EAT-DOG FUNNY BOOK PUBLISHING BIZ.
LOOK WHAT HAPPENED USING THE BLUE PLATE WITH RED INK!
WOW!
FAR OUT!
NOW LET'S TRY A PURPLE-TO-ORANGE SPLIT FOUNTAIN.
KA-CHUNK-KA-CHUNK-KA-C
NK-KA-CHUNK-KA-CH

“We didn’t see a penny of benefit off MODEL

artwork is getting cleaner and sweeter all the time. Wait’ll you see the DEMI interactive fantasy adventure he’s working on. It’s like an X-rated role-playing game, where a roll of the dice tells you which page to turn to next. Each page is heavily illustrated, and it’s all on computer. He’s using 600 dpi scans of his artwork, and told me he’s already used up three 88-megabyte Syquest cartridges!

RON: *And you launched International Comics Star Kevin J. Taylor.*

MOM: Yeah, you could say that we launched International Comics Star **Kevin J. Taylor’s** career.

RON: *How did that come about?*

MOM: Kevin first submitted the entire manuscript for the MODEL BY DAY comic to us by mail. We hadn’t previously met or spoken, though it has often happened that I’ve been contacted by artists on our 800 line (such was the case with **Matt Howarth**) for a preliminary chat — something I’m always happy to do. I showed the comic around to Fred and **Guy Colwell**, who was working with us at that time, and we suggested to Kevin that he redraw a couple of his panels and make some of the female characters more distinctive. It was kind of hard to follow the story, because two or three different women looked enough alike that you couldn’t tell you were looking at a different person.

RON: *I haven’t heard from Kevin since he got famous.*

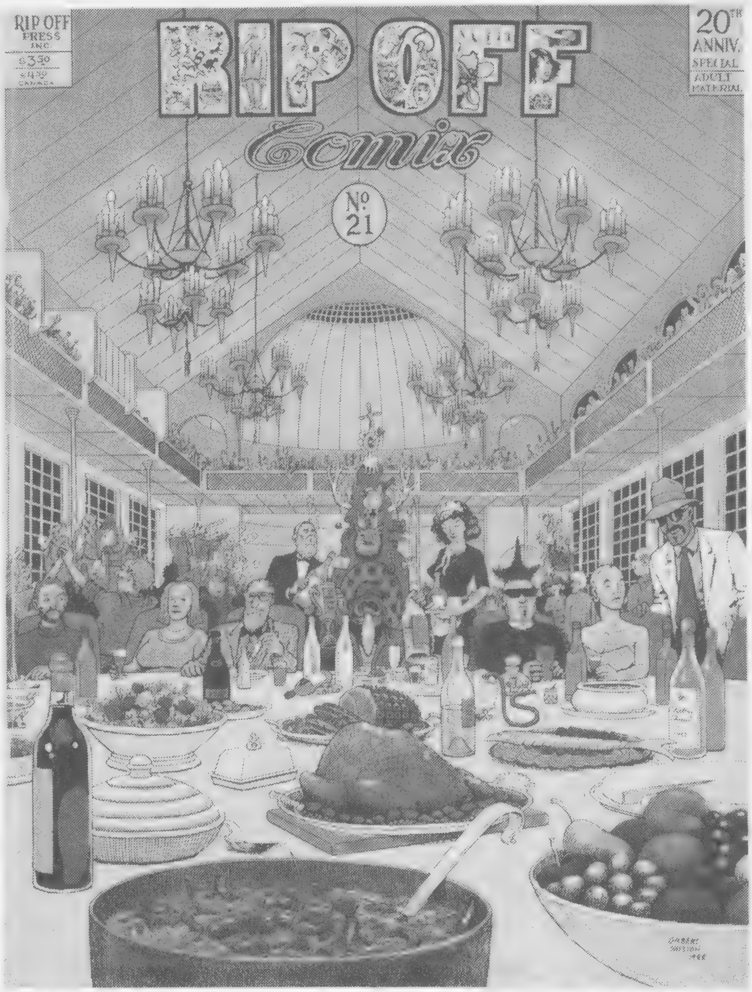
MOM: Well, I’ve heard from him once or twice. But I’ve made many efforts to obtain — you know, he pretty much took himself to CRY FOR DAWN without any reference to why. He thought they were giving him a better deal or something. We didn’t see so much as a penny of benefit off the MODEL BY DAY going to FOX as a TV movie. We were supposed to do a reprint of the MODEL BY DAY series revised to be PG, with a “now a Fox TV movie” on the cover. And that fell through because, mysteriously, every single direct-market distributor failed to list the new printing in their catalog for the month it was solicited. And the movie was supposed to air that month, but wasn’t aired for another two or three months.

RON: *It was buried. Opposite the Superbowl.*

MOM: That whole thing just kind of fell apart.

RON: *So I’m not the only one. I feel better.*

MOM: It seemed like some kind of goddamned conspiracy because I printed up 9,000 copies of an 11 x 17 store poster announcing the reprint of the series and sent them out to all the distributors for inclusion in their flyer packs, yet somehow they overlooked the fact that this was supposed to be coming and didn’t put it in their catalogs. The ship month came and I didn’t have a single order.



RON: *Oh my! That’s very odd. Um, his latest effort is on slick paper and it’s all four-color.*

MOM: Oh! I never find out these things. All of my customers want his books, but I have yet to find a single person who will sell them to me, so I can put them in my catalog. I can’t get them. I don’t even know where to get them.

RON: *Well, I just got handed one in a comics shop. But can’t you order them from the publisher, apparently him and CRY FOR DAWN?*

MOM: Well, is CRY FOR DAWN in existence now? I thought they were —

RON: *No, it’s someone else. SIRIUS. That’s what they call themselves. Sirius, the Dog Star.*

MOM: I spoke with Kevin in the last month, and maybe he did give me some information on how to contact these people. I was hoping they’d contact me. I mean, I’m standing here saying, “Here, let me give you some money.” Sell me some books.

RON: *So, let me see you do these new things. You’ve got DEMI, you’ve got, is it BLACK ANGEL?*

MOM: Oh, the Black Angel is the cover image on MIND PROBE, which is something we’re publishing this April. It’s a 52-page gothic anthology book that was put together by Empire Studios in L.A., which is young, up-and-coming cartoonists, writers and stuff. And I just solicited a kind of a space spoof thing called INTERSTELLAR OVERDRIVE.

RON: *That’s a cool title.*

MOM: PG-rated, featuring the abundant feminine charms of Flexia Bast.

RON: *That’s a great name. That’s from Magnecom, right?*

MOM: Magnecom is the all-ages imprint we created. It was supposed to be Iguana

BY DAY going to FOX as a TV movie."

Comics, but it turned out there already was an Iguana Comics company. Three Chinese-American kids from LA, who'd actually filed a fictitious name statement and even printed up 40,000 copies of a full-color superhero comic without getting into the direct-market first. Clueless. Somebody's got Daddy's money to play with.

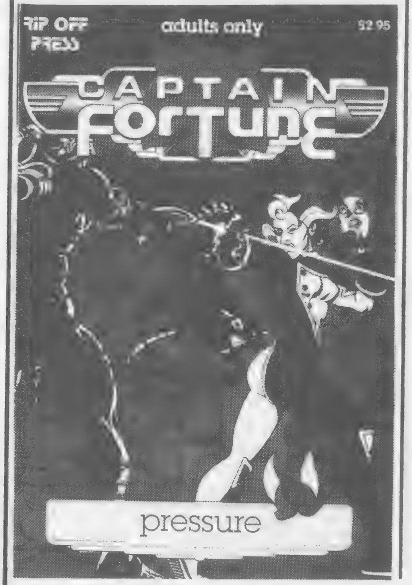
I had tried to solicit some all-ages books and I was hearing stories about retailers automatically assuming that anything that came out from Rip Off Press couldn't be shown to children and had to be hidden under the counter. I had seen copies of CARTOON HISTORY in the adults-only section at a local Comics & Comix store. So I decided that we needed to do something to counteract that perception and the easiest way to do that was an alternate imprint, one which would always be PG, all-ages.

RON: *And you have a bunch of titles under that?*

MOM: Not really. It came at what seems to have been a bad time in the market, generally speaking. We brought out a couple of **Sterling Clark** comics, a couple of **Doug Wheeler's** "Desecrated" anthologies and two CUTEY BUNNY books from **Joshua Quagmire** under the Magnecom imprint, and that's about it so far.

RON: *You've done things like, oh, what was that, Magnecom did a superhero comic. You said the guy pestered you until you published it.*

MOM: THE RENEGADE. **Sterling Clark**'s still pestering me. We put out THE RENEGADE #1, which was really pretty amateurish. And a couple of years later he was better and he had the services of a good inker and we put out RENEGADE: NIGHT SLAYER, which featured an appearance by KOLCHAK, THE NIGHT STALKER. So it kind of had a hook. And it did okay.



RON: *Did you license that?*

MOM: That was an arrangement between him and the creator of NIGHT STALKER, **Jeff Rice**.

RON: *Well, you told me this little story about how he just sort of showed up at your office one day.*

MOM: Oh, yeah! Sterling is one of the most earnest and persistent people I have ever met. He lives in Newport News now. His wife's in the Air Force and got transferred back East. I think he's got some kind of a day job now and he and **Jeff Austin** (who's worked on some of the Rebel Studios titles) have drawn up another six or seven more issues of THE RENEGADE, but he hasn't been able to find a publisher to work with. Somebody was going to take it on, but the orders on the first issue were below the go-level. So he's sitting there on all this material trying to talk me into doing it on some kind of a deal where he's going to subsidize the print run or pay for the advertising. With the market the way it is right now I'm not too sanguine about the whole idea.

He just really, really wants to be in comics. I always thought he should try to go to New York and get work doing art chores for a few years before trying to do his own stuff.

RON: *That takes a while. I did that, I don't know, twenty years. Are you going to stop doing Magnecom?*

MOM: No. When a title that's right for Magnecom comes up, it comes up. I'm always willing to do all-ages books under Magnecom, and then there's several all-ages books which for reasons of classic association I want to do under Rip Off Press, including the WONDER WART-HOG reprints coming out this summer.

RON: *Oh, that's lovely! Comic books or trade paperbacks?*

MOM: Comic books. A lot of this material's been out of print for 20 years. So I thought, summer's always kind of a dead time for us, the comic shops are flooded. Let's have a "Summer of Fun" special. We're going to bring out three issues of a new comic-book series full of old material called WONDER WART-HOG: HOG OF STEEL in June, July and August.

RON: *I like it! A superhero book.*

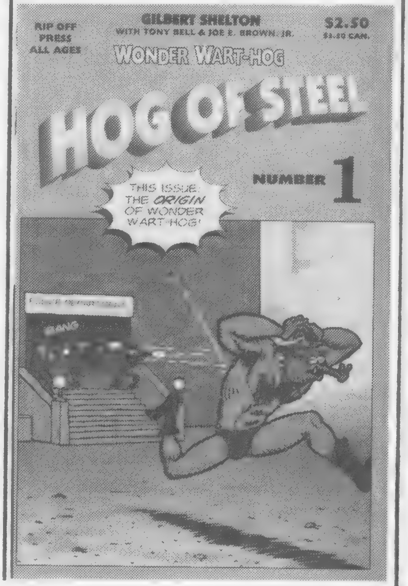
MOM: Well, he IS one of the oldest superheroes in existence, really. He pretty much started outas a straight take-off on Superman, but he's developed his own personality over the years.

RON: *The big ham. You do only a handful of new titles a year and it's pretty much like what you like?*

MOM: Usually about one a month, which is more than a "handful" but it's about all I can handle considering I'm the entire pre-press department in addition to all my other hats.

RON: *When we worked together on CAPTAIN FORTUNE, you practiced editorial non-interference. Other than making a great selection of sample pages for the ashcan, you gave me complete freedom. Is that Rip Off policy?*

MOM: My editorial style on CAPTAIN FORTUNE was typical. We sometimes work with people who need guidance — as we are often the first professional venue for new comics artists, I frequently find myself explaining the details of


RIP OFF PRESS ALL AGES
GILBERT SHELTON
WITH TONY BELL & JOE E. BROWN, JR.
$2.50
WONDER WART-HOG
HOG OF STEEL
NUMBER 1
THIS ISSUE: THE ORIGIN OF WONDER WART-HOG!

“What would hurt small publishers is if either distributor filed

graphic reproduction (no, not *that* kind!) and the operation of a proportion wheel to neophytes — and I do watch out for things like copyright infringement, libel, misspelled words, etc. But I feel as we are publishing work that is entirely creator-owned, it is not our place to dictate to the artist how he or she should do the job.

RON: *How do you find new artists?*

MOM: People find us, for the most part. I get submissions on the rate of probably ten a week. I just cleaned out my submissions bin after a year-and-a-half, finally found enough slack time to be able to do that. And 90% of them are simply not professional or not the sort of thing we do.

RON: *What would that mean? Like outright pornography? Or —*

MOM: Well, for instance there was this one guy who sent us this stuff looked kind of like **Bill Ward**, melon-breasted, sweet-faced girls in bondage poses. Really well drawn but heavy-duty B & D, a bit too much for me.

RON: *You guys don't go that extreme, do you?*

MOM: Well, we published that KINKY KLITT comic and that was pretty bad. Furthermore the artist was pissed off at us over the results. He felt like he didn't get what he expected to get out of it. We were kind of disappointed in the sales too, and to top it off, we got letters from the Harley-Davidson legal department over it.

RON: *Oops!*

MOM: Well, she's a biker. What else is she supposed to be wearing but a Harley bandana? Gilbert always referred to them as the Heffalump-Dumpaloon, I guess we should have changed it before we went to press.

RON: *So, what actually defines a Rip Off comic? What are you looking for in them?*

MOM: What I like to see is good art, stories that make sense and are not simple-minded, and a good sense of humor.

RON: *You have a pretty good sense of humor.*

MOM: Oh, ask my children about that. I'm afraid that I'm an inveterate punster a lot of the time. A trait which my son apparently shares. He and I sit around the house trading groaners a lot.

RON: *So humor is a pretty strong component?*

MOM: Yeah, well, I always used to think that Rip Off Press was primarily a publisher of adult humor.

RON: *Yeah,* comic *books. What a concept.*

MOM: We've had occasion to bring out some fairly serious adventure, science fiction and so forth —

Our Fearless Leader, Frederic B. Todd.

RON: *Like BLACK GLASS?*

MOM: No, that wasn't us. That was a good series. I'm betting that since issue two hasn't come out yet that it didn't pay the rent. But I would have liked to have seen that story continue. There's just been so much good stuff that's been sort of heart-breakingly unsuccessful in the last five years. It saddens me that the marketplace has come to such a low that really good material just can't be brought out because the retailers or the fans or whoever is ultimately responsible for poor sales are not supporting it.

Then again, there are other things to spend their money on. The boomers are older than they were twenty years ago and they've got mortgages, kids with college funds, alimony, car payments . . .

RON: *That's odd. You'd think that if they learned to enjoy non-superhero comic books back then they wouldn't have stopped. Did they forget?*

MOM: In some cases. I've talked to people who've found us in the 800 directory and they say, “FREAK BROTHERS! Wow! I used to read those.” We get new customers for the mail-order catalog that way, all the time.

RON: *Sort of nostalgia?*

MOM: For some it's nostalgia, but we also have a lot of mail order customers who are young people. I've got FREAK BROTHERS fans who were turned on to it by their parents.

RON: *Cool! That's great! I was just thinking, that considering the resur-*

bankruptcy with next month's cash flow unpaid."

gence of dope jokes on the moronotron, do you think little Gen X Slackers'll be after them?

THE FABULOUS FURRY
FREAK BROTHERS

MOM: Well, they still sell steadily. Even the issue of FREAK BROTHERS that's been out for 24 years still sells more copies in a year than the average new black-and-white comic.

RON: *What do you think is going to happen, with the recent changes in the direct market?*

MOM: This Marvel/Heroes' World thing looks to be spelling the end of the direct market much more quickly than anybody thought. I'm still waiting for some word from DC, although if you think about it there's not necessarily any reason why they're *obligated* to respond by taking over a distributor of their own. The international conglomerate that owns DC already *has* its own distribution company, and the loss of Heroes' World as an outlet is probably pretty insignificant to them. They certainly didn't amount to more than about 5 percent of *our* sales, anyway.

But you just have this sense that Marvel's pulling the rug out from under Capital and Diamond is going to force them into some kind of a counter move, as they scramble to make up for the loss and consolidate their position in the marketplace. What would really hurt small press publishers like us is if either of those two companies dropped us overnight, or worse yet filed for bankruptcy with our expected next month's cash flow left unpaid.

BEAT ME OFF, SCOTTY
HEY RUSH! BEND OVER FAT BOY!
SORRY, MY BRAIN'S MOMENTARILY STUCK IN MY ZIPPER

I've been wracking my brain over ways to do without the direct market distribution system ever since Capital dropped their cancellation fees bomb on us in January of '94. Something like a publisher's co-op, maybe. I don't know whether the output of the all the small press companies together is enough to support a distribution company at the level we see now, with a big monthly catalog and circulation in the high figures.

Maybe we could sign up stores for a monthly subscription to new titles, paid for by credit card, and everything would be on a returnable basis so that if something didn't fly they wouldn't get stuck with it. They could always phone in and adjust their order if there was something they didn't want, or they thought they would need more of a particular new title.

My main problem is I'm long on schemes and short on the time and energy to develop them. It's pretty certain though, that as soon as an economic niche opens up somebody will come along and fill it. Meanwhile, I get the feeling we cockroaches had better stay underneath the stove until those elephants finish dancing around on the kitchen floor.

RON: *To sum up, you and Fred find Rip Off runs more efficiently as a Mom-and-Pop operation?*

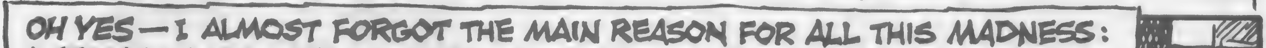
MOM: There's no question that the productivity rises significantly when it's just us doing the work. Nobody knows as much about it as we do. And inevitably as you add more people, you end up cutting into the productivity of the other people because they have to spend time communicating with each other, explaining how to do the job.

RON: *You're into the telepathy end.*

MOM: Exactly. Fred and I mostly don't have to communicate very much. We already know. But I haven't yet communicated to him the fact that I've been on the phone for an hour and a half because I'm being interviewed and I think he's probably down there grumbling. So I should really wrap this up.

RON: *I was just going to say, "You know it all." That's a really good wrap-up.*

MOM: Oh, yeah. If only it were true.


OH YES — I ALMOST FORGOT THE MAIN REASON FOR ALL THIS MADNESS: A STRING OF TOP-QUALITY UNDERGROUND COMIX THAT KEPT AMERICA LAUGHING THROUGHOUT THE NIXON-REAGAN YEARS. AND THAT WEREN'T EASY FOLKS!
FAT FREDDY'S COMICS & STORIES No. 1
STIRVERT
ADVENTURES OF JESUS
CAT
CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE
THOROUGHLY RIPPED FREAK BROTHERS
NOSE
THE FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS
MOTHER'S OATS COMIX
RIP OFF COMIX
MORE ADVENTURES OF FAT FREDDY'S CAT
HYDROGEN BOMB
No. 2 MOTOR CITY COMICS
THE RIP OFF
END

"I used to draw continued stories on big tablets."

DAN SPIEGLE

One of the hidden blessings of working for COMICS INTERVIEW is getting to talk with the Grand Old Men of comics, the people who we hitherto (at least, in my case) only knew as names in a credit box. Dan Spiegle is one of those folks, a talented and friendly gentleman who did six years of the HOPALONG CASSIDY newspaper strip, who crafted more series for Dell/Gold Key/Western than you can fit into a credits listing, who went on to limn such books as BLACKHAWK, CROSSFIRE, TRUE CRIME, Mr. E in SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE, the ROGER RABBIT graphic novel, and AGENT 13 for TSR.

Dan is one of those folks who may not have quite gotten their due from comics fandom. But among the pros, his reputation is great indeed, and I've seen more than a few young turks who drop their jaw down to their shoelaces when they contemplate a Spiegle original. This is usually followed by a rush of guilty jealousy: Boy, if I could only draw like that!

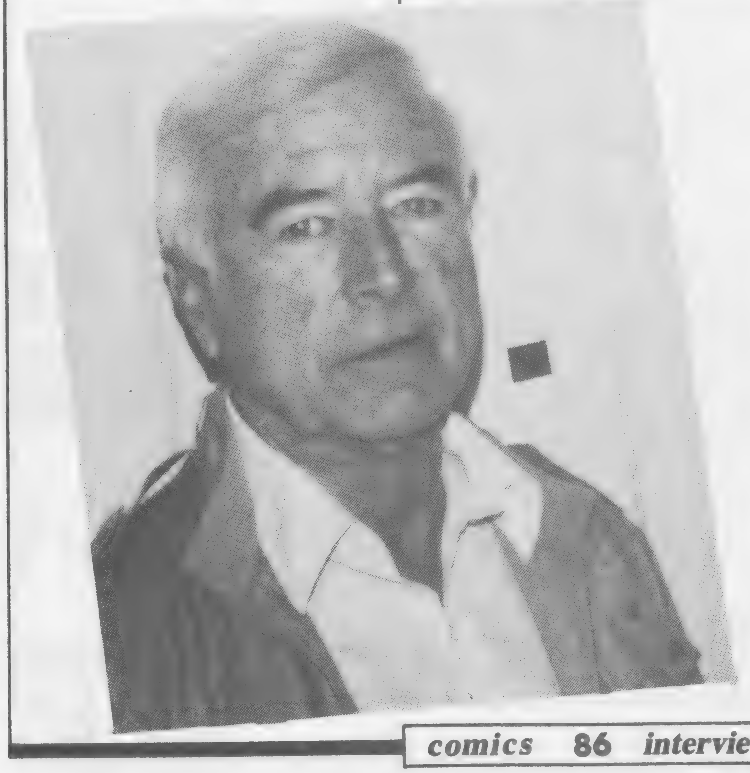
Well, anyway, let's get to the interview, and find out what Dan has to say about a 45-year tour of duty in comics . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Dan, my first question is my most overused question, because it's one of my best. What got you interested in becoming a cartoonist?*

DAN SPIEGLE: Well, ever since I could hang onto a pencil, I used to draw continued stories on these Big Five tablets. Big Five tablets were before your time, of course.

LOU: *Yeah, just a little bit.*

DAN: They were big tablets of scratch pad-type paper, and I'd draw comic strips in them for fun when I was in grammar school. I knew all my life that cartooning



VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dan Spiegle

Family Configuration: Wife, Marie (married for 46 years); four children, two boys and two girls and three granddaughters. Our son Dan is the oldest; older son, Kip, is second, then Carrie is third (she does my lettering); then Gail is our youngest (she's going to City College, trying to find herself). Our granddaughters: Brandi, Paula and Shana.

Favorite Comic to Read: TERRY AND THE PIRATES, and STEVE CANYON later, and BUZ SAWYER.

Favorite Comic I've Worked on: CROSSFIRE.

Pet Peeve about Comics: Too much superhero.

CROSSFIRE ©1995 Mark Evanier, Will Meugniot & Dan Spiegle / TRUE CRIME COMICS ©1995 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. (Art© Spiegle) / HOPALONG CASSIDY ©1995 King Features / The Unknown Soldier, Nemesis, Mister E, Sgt. Rock, Blackhawk, Batman & Green Arrow ©1995 DC Comics, Inc. / Skywolf ©1995 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. / Penn and Chriss ©1995 Dan Spiegle / SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON ©1995 Western Printing and Lithographing, Inc. / MAVERICK ©1995 Warner Bros. Films / Korak, Son of Tarzan ©1995 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. / Mickey Mouse ©1995 The Walt Disney Company / THE WIZ ©1995

"I didn't know much about submitting when I started out."

was what I wanted to do.

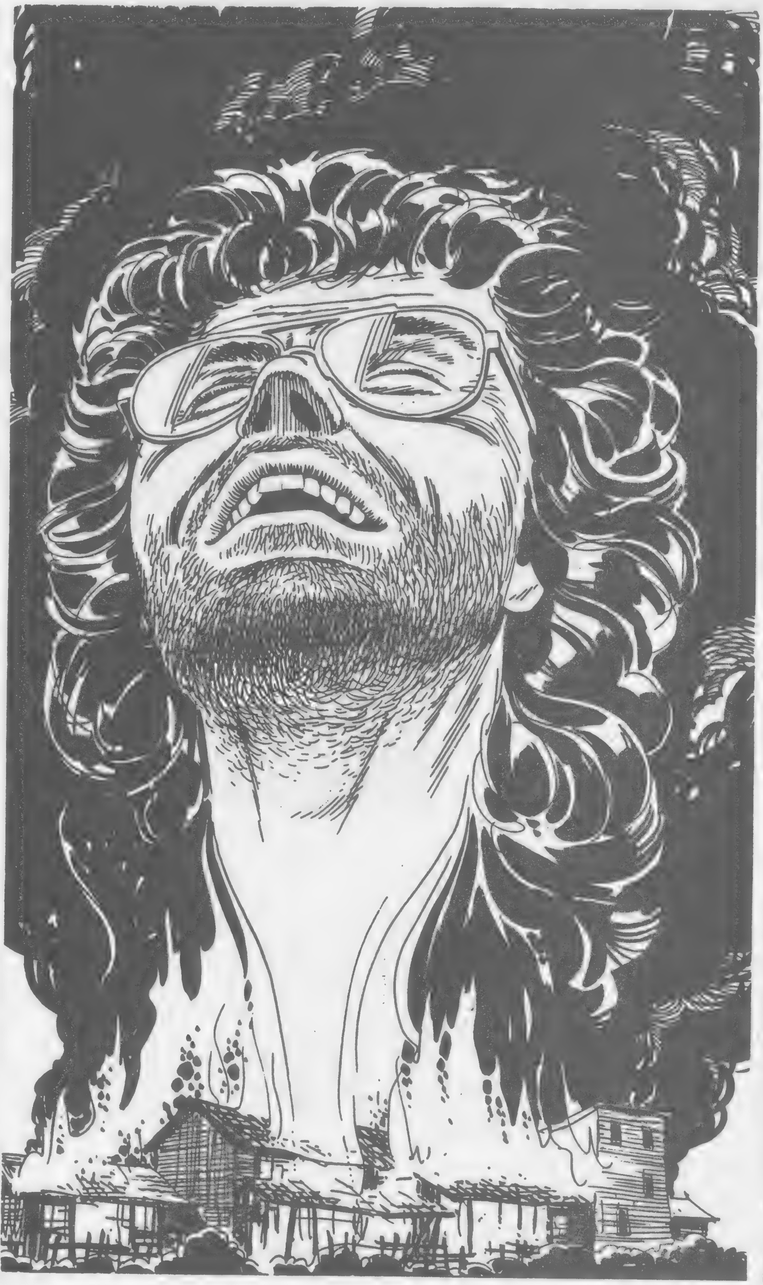
LOU: *Were you a big fan of comic strips back then?*

DAN: Oh, yeah. TERRY AND THE PIRATES and all the other adventure-type strips were what I loved.

LOU: *Most of the old pros that I've talked with list TERRY and Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON as their favorites.*

DAN: Also, I liked BUZ SAWYER, which I thought was just great. **Roy Crane** was an excellent draftsman, I felt, because even though BUZ was sort of semi-cartoony, it still had a realism about it. Particularly in the War, when **Crane** was drawing all sorts of military aircraft. Aircraft carriers and all that stuff. There was a lot of authentic detail in there that most cartoonists wouldn't have bothered with. You could tell he loved it.

Here: The cover illustration from TRUE CRIME COMICS SPECIAL #2: "Apocalypse in Waco." Next page: More of Dan's storytelling, from the second issue of TRUE CRIME. Both are from Eclipse.



LOU: *In that vein, I'd almost expect you to be a CAPTAIN EASY fan, too.*

DAN: Yeah. That was a good strip, too.

LOU: *You once mentioned that Robert Fawcett was one of your big influences. Can you tell me what you appreciated in his work and how you think he influenced you?*

DAN: Well, as an illustrator, I really liked him. He had a sort of loose style, but, again, he could come up with detail. But he did it in an impressionistic manner. Lots of darks and lights. He was a master of spotting the darks on the page. Just his overall draftsmanship was influential to me.

LOU: *Well, that's something I've noticed about your stuff, too, how well it comes across in black and white, and its draftsmanlike precision. I've noticed this particularly in books like TRUE CRIME.*

DAN: Those are the things I love to do.

LOU: *And it shows. Okay, the legend goes that you submitted a strip to King Features when you were in high school, and they turned it down, and that's when you decided to become a comic-strip artist. Is all that true?*

DAN: Yeah. I didn't know that much about submitting comic strips when I started out. I had heard of King Features and thought I would give it a go. The trouble was, I had *colored* my drawings. I had no idea about color separation or any of those things. I just submitted it that way, colored in, and they were nice enough to send a letter back saying, "In the future, just submit it in black and white." They also had a few encouraging comments, and it made me feel like maybe there'd be a chance, somewhere down the road.

LOU: *What kind of strip was it?*

DAN: I can't even remember. *(Laughter.)* Sort of an adventure-type strip, probably with airplanes. The kind of stuff the average kid liked in those days.

Then, of course, the Second World War came along, and that kind of took care of any ambitions I had at that time.

LOU: *You signed up with the Navy around 1941 or so. Did they use your artistic talents during your hitch?*

DAN: I was an aviation ordinance man in the Navy. We hung bombs, cleaned guns, loaded aircraft, and that sort of stuff. In my spare times, I would draw for the base newspaper. I was stationed on Maui on a CASU-Four unit, which is a Carrier Aircraft Service Unit.

“I was an aviation ordinance man in the Navy.”

INTRUSION
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0

LOU: *Did you do insignias for any of the planes?*

DAN: Yeah. I did insignias and painted the squadron emblems, and they hung them up in the officers' quarters, in their barrooms and places like that. I went into town and bought little cans of enamel, which was the only kind of paint they had around that time, so I'd have to wait a long time for the colors to dry. And as these different squadrons flew into the base, they would all ask me to do their squadron insignia. We put them all on panels and hung them up in the officers' mess.

LOU: *Some of that plane art has become pretty big stuff, historically. They've issued several books of insignias and art that were painted on World War II planes.*

DAN: I noticed those, and took note that the ones they used were mainly from the European theater of war. They didn't include much from the South Pacific, where I was stationed.

LOU: *After the war, you went to Chouinard Art Institute on the G.I. Bill. Was this your preparation for your beginning cartoonist's career?*

DAN: Yeah. **Mrs. Chouinard** used to frown on cartooning, even though she was a very good friend of **Walt Disney**. **Disney** used to take a lot of her students as they graduated. But she liked fine art, and thought that was the way to go. So I was trying to develop a comic strip while I was going to Chouinard. I took their four-year illustration course. That gave me a good background in drawing. But while I was there, because I was also collecting the G.I. Bill; it gave me a chance to sort of support myself and still do what I wanted to do, which was to learn how to draw comic strips. I was trying to submit a western strip. So I would draw that sometimes in the life class, because I had done so much life class drawing that I could work in some of my strip work at the same time. And whenever **Mrs. Chouinard** would come in the room, I would lay my life class drawing back over my comic strip art. *(Laughter.)* I'd start a life class drawing, and then flip it over and underneath I would have my comic strip. I think

"The G.I. Bill gave me a chance to draw."

she'd've kicked me out if she'd known what I was doing.

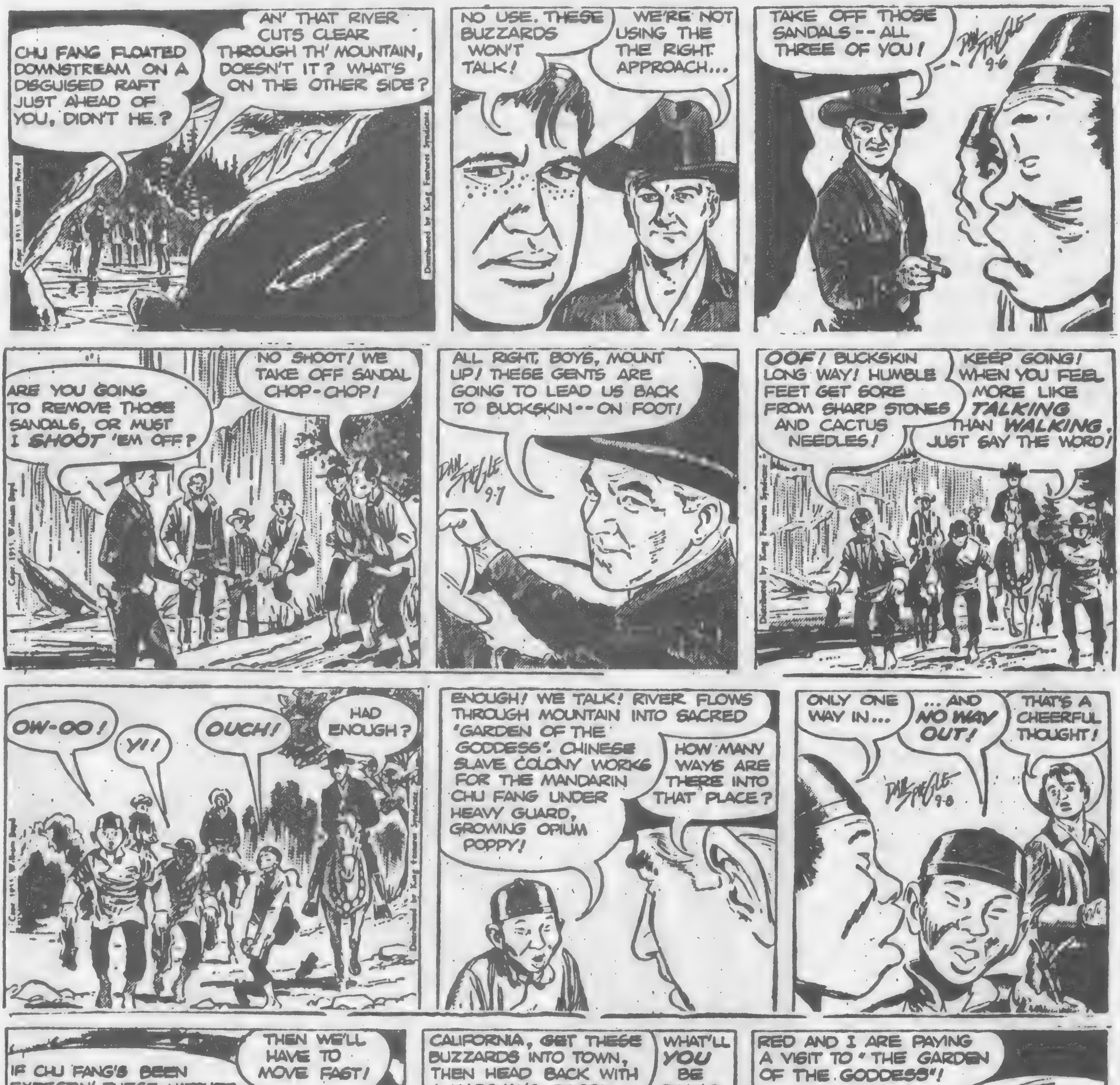
LOU: *Yeah, kind of like hiding your comic book inside your math textbook or something.*

DAN: Same idea!

LOU: *Okay, your big break came in 1949, when you landed the HOPALONG CASSIDY newspaper strip. That came about, I understand, when you met Bill Boyd, who was the Hopalong Cassidy of films and TV. So can you tell me how it was you met him and got the strip?*

DAN: Yeah. When I was at Chouinard, one of the kids in class came up to me and said he had seen an ad in the newspaper for a comic-strip writer. I was kind of desperate then, getting down to my last

Four days worth of Spiegle's run on the HOPALONG CASSIDY comic strip, 1955. Dan originally started in 1949 — it was his first big break.


CHU FANG FLOATED DOWNSTREAM ON A DISGUISED RAFT JUST AHEAD OF YOU, DIDN'T HE?
AN' THAT RIVER CUTS CLEAR THROUGH TH' MOUNTAIN, DOESN'T IT? WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE?
NO USE. THESE BUZZARDS WON'T TALK!
WE'RE NOT USING THE RIGHT APPROACH...
TAKE OFF THOSE SANDALS -- ALL THREE OF YOU!
9-6
ARE YOU GOING TO REMOVE THOSE SANDALS, OR MUST I SHOOT 'EM OFF?
NO SHOOT! WE TAKE OFF SANDAL CHOP-CHOP!
ALL RIGHT, BOYS, MOUNT UP! THESE GENTS ARE GOING TO LEAD US BACK TO BUCKSKIN -- ON FOOT!
9-7
OOF! BUCKSKIN LONG WAY! HUMBLE FEET GET SORE FROM SHARP STONES AND CACTUS NEEDLES!
KEEP GOING! WHEN YOU FEEL MORE LIKE TALKING THAN WALKING, JUST SAY THE WORD!
OW-OO!
YI!
OUCH!
HAD ENOUGH?
ENOUGH! WE TALK! RIVER FLOWS THROUGH MOUNTAIN INTO SACRED 'GARDEN OF THE GODDESS'. CHINESE SLAVE COLONY WORKS FOR THE MANDARIN CHU FANG UNDER HEAVY GUARD, GROWING OPIUM POPPY!
HOW MANY WAYS ARE THERE INTO THAT PLACE?
ONLY ONE WAY IN...
... AND NO WAY OUT!
THAT'S A CHEERFUL THOUGHT!
9-8
IF CHU FANG'S BEEN EXPECTIN' THESE HATCHET-MEN AN' SUSPECTS SOMETHIN'S WRONG, WE'RE APT T'HAVE COMPANY!
THEN WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE FAST!
CALIFORNIA, GET THESE BUZZARDS INTO TOWN, THEN HEAD BACK WITH A MARSHAL'S POSSE ON THE DOUBLE!
WHAT'LL YOU BE DOIN'?
RED AND I ARE PAYING A VISIT TO "THE GARDEN OF THE GODDESS"!
9-9

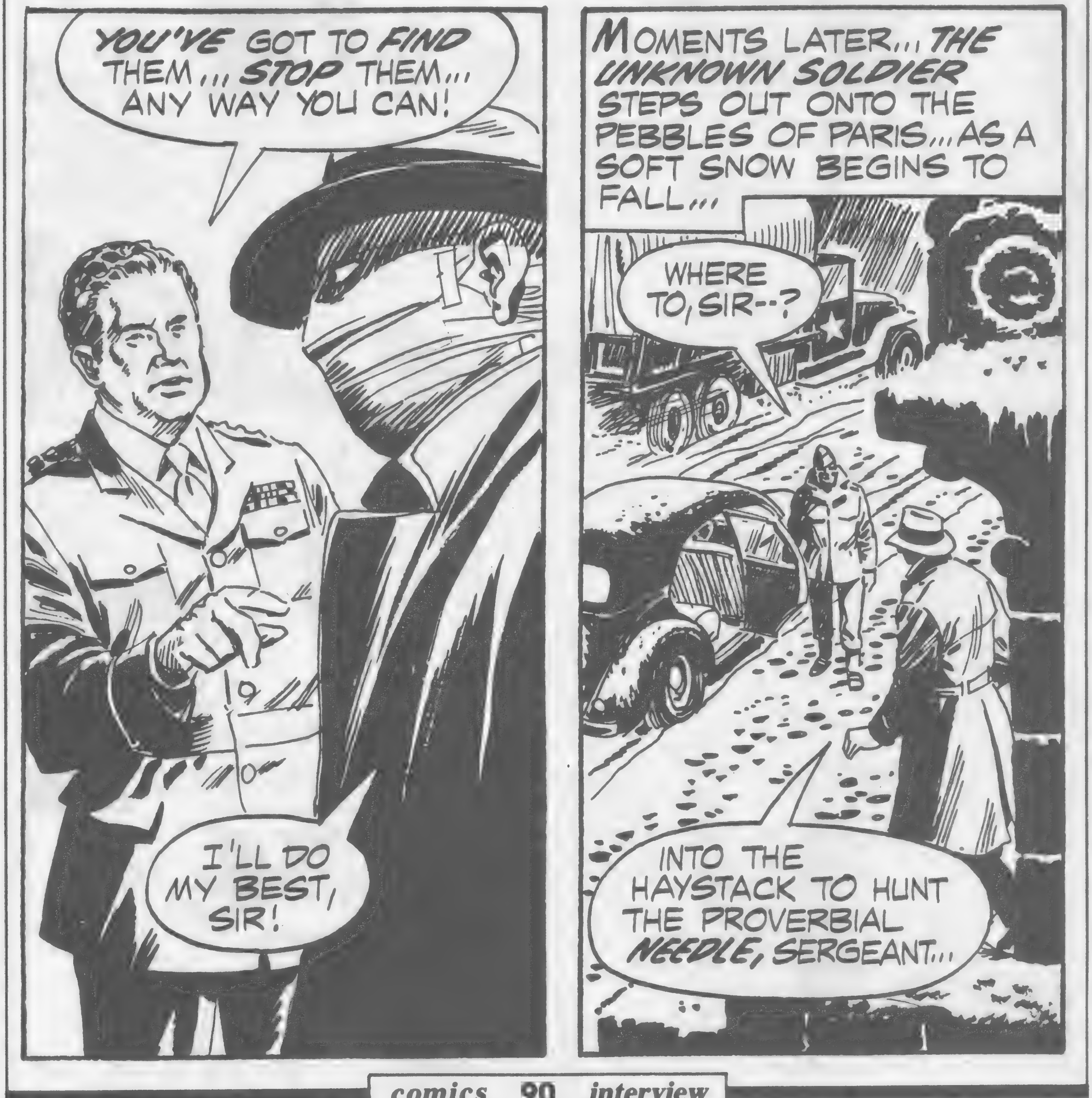
“I took my samples to a place that represented Bozo.”

year. *(Laughter.)* And I said, “Well, hell, I'll try that. I'll try anything.” So I took my samples and stuff up to a place in Hollywood, and it turned out to be an outfit that represented Bozo the Clown. And I said, “Gee, I can't do real funny cartoons; that's not my style.” So the guy I talked to there said, “What do you do?” And I showed them. And it just so happened that the fellow I showed the work to was the brother of the manager of Hopalong Cassidy. So he said, “Listen, **Bill Boyd's** office is just down the street a ways. Why don't you go down there and see if you can't talk him into a comic strip? Because he's going so great now, and he's so popular, it'd help him cover all the bases.”

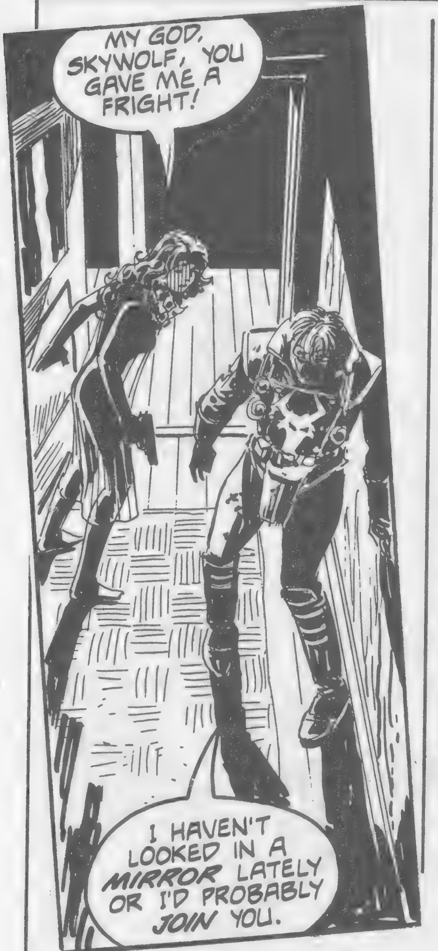
So I went down there and the manager was in, and, fortunately, so was **Bill Boyd.** The manager looked at my stuff and took me back to **Bill Boyd's** office. I tried to talk **Boyd** into it, but he wasn't too sure to start with, and said, “Let me think about it, and I'll call you in a few days.” And they did call me, and had me come back up. Bill said, “We think it might be a good idea. I think your stuff will work, because I don't care whether you can draw *me* so well, but the fact that you can draw horses so well is the most important thing for a western strip.” *(Laughter.)* So after a few little delays, we got it started.

And I was doing the dailies, even the lettering. I worked on the first story. But it became too much for me to do everything on it; I couldn't handle it all, particularly when I was just out of school. So they got a writer and a letterer. Then they decided to do a Sunday page, so I did that too, along with making the color indications. I was really busy, and struggling, because I didn't know what I was doing.*(Laughter.)* In fact, I developed an ulcer about the first year on the job. Fortunately, I caught it in time and it was not that serious.

Dan's first work for DC Comics came in the form of pencils and inks for an Unknown Soldier.


YOU'VE GOT TO FIND THEM,,, STOP THEM,,, ANY WAY YOU CAN!
I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR!
MOMENTS LATER,,, THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER STEPS OUT ONTO THE PEBBLES OF PARIS,,, AS A SOFT SNOW BEGINS TO FALL,,,
WHERE TO, SIR--?
INTO THE HAYSTACK TO HUNT THE PROVERBIAL NEEDLE, SERGEANT,,,

"I understand King Features shreded originals."


MY GOD, SKYWOLF, YOU GAVE ME A FRIGHT!
I HAVEN'T LOOKED IN A *MIRROR* LATELY OR I'D PROBABLY *JOIN* YOU.

LOU: *Glad to hear that.*

DAN: But it was just the long hours, and struggling, and not quite knowing what I was doing.

LOU: *Well, I don't know how many readers know how hard it is to put out a daily strip 365¼ days a year like that. I guess you don't know how hard that is until you start doing it yourself.*

DAN: Yeah, and it ran for six years. So that was a lot of stuff. During that time, I learned to draw quite fast. My pencils were very rough, because I figured that I didn't want to go over it twice. *(Laughter.)* So I did most of my own inking. And it showed. *(Laughter.)* Pretty rough when I look back on the stuff, pretty crude. But I learned a lot from it.

LOU: *Did you ever get any comments back from Bill Boyd on it?*

DAN: No. You know, at that time, I didn't even know the strips would be valuable. I was not interested in keeping them. Also, I understand that King Features was shredding all the originals after they used them, because they had such a tremendous amount of comic strips coming into their syndicate. I guess the other cartoonists felt the same way I did, and didn't even save their work. So a lot of it was shredded. And I wish I'd known how valuable they would be.

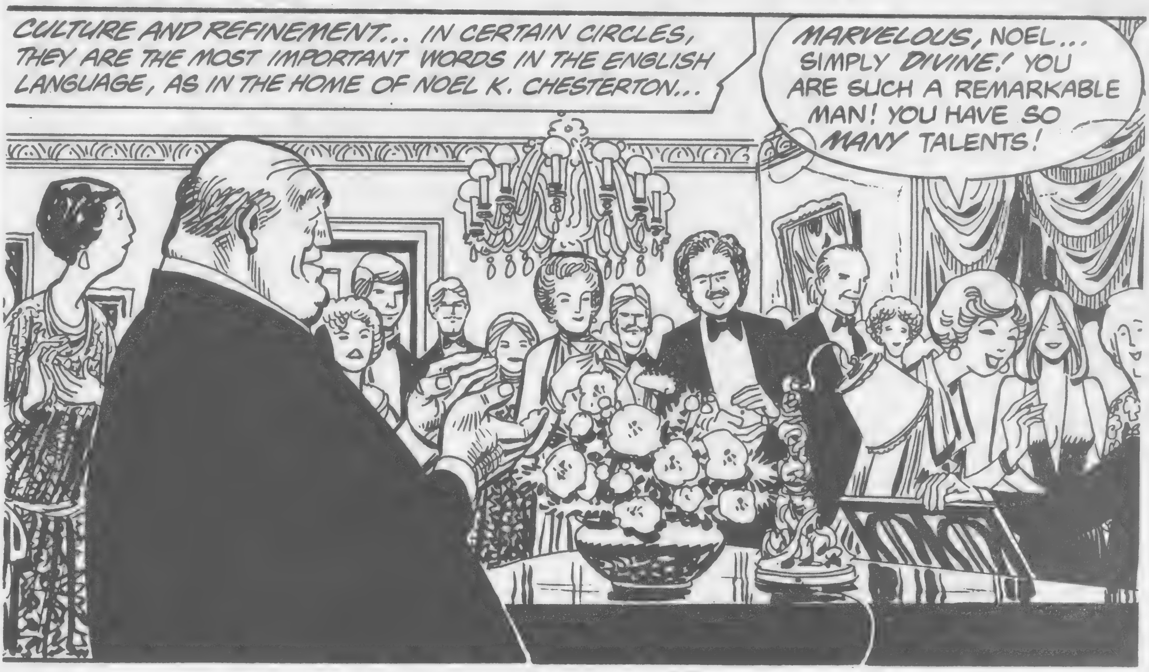
LOU: *I guess at that point nobody did. In fact, they were shredding comic pages all the way up through the mid-'60s at the major companies, and possibly after that. So it's not surprising to know that the comic-strip syndicates shredded strips like that. But it's kinda unnerving to think that if they shredded your HOPALONG CASSIDY strip, they probably shredded strips by people like, say, Hal Foster and Alex Raymond, too.*

DAN: Can you imagine that? Boy, what a loss. A fellow contacted me from Canada, and he said that he had saved all of my daily strips. So I said, "Gee, I'll pay you if you'll xerox them." I didn't even have those. So, by golly, he sent me four or five years of my daily strips, and I have those in xeroxed form now.

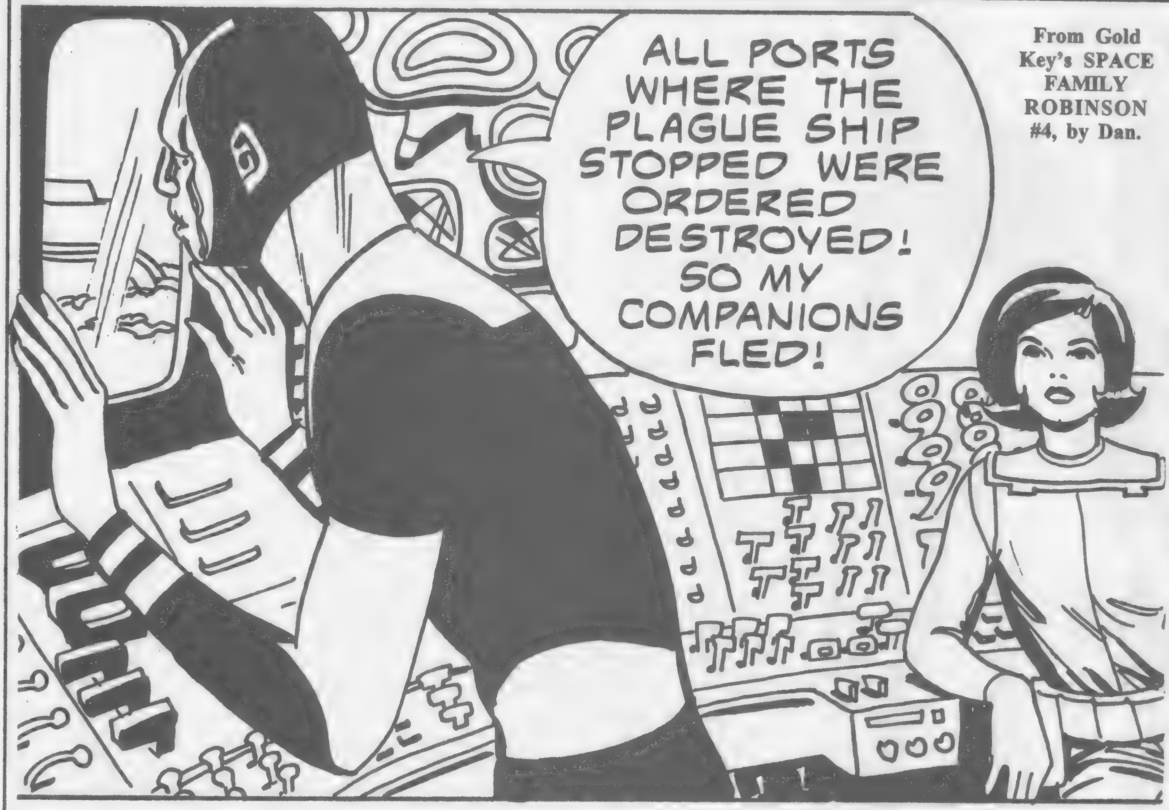
LOU: *Around 1955, the HOPALONG CASSIDY strip was dropped, and you did the PENN AND CHRIS strip, which was only seen when it was reproduced in a 1972 fanzine. Can you tell us something about that one?*

DAN: Well, first I went to work for Western Publishing and did a lot of westerns there, like MAVERICK and LAWMAN and RIFLEMAN and a lot of others, plus SEA HUNT . . . just about anything that was doing much on television. And then I was kinda working on a comic strip of my own, and I felt that I wanted to do something on the sea, which was always fascinating to me. So I tried my hand on PENN AND CHRIS, which

Above: Skywolf, from Eclipse's AIRBOY series. Below: An example of Dan's run on DC Comics' back-up series, NEMESIS. All artwork is by Dan.


CULTURE AND REFINEMENT... IN CERTAIN CIRCLES, THEY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AS IN THE HOME OF NOEL K. CHESTERTON...
MARVELOUS, NOEL... SIMPLY *DIVINE!* YOU ARE SUCH A REMARKABLE MAN! YOU HAVE SO *MANY* TALENTS!

"SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON was one of the longest-running."


ALL PORTS WHERE THE PLAGUE SHIP STOPPED WERE ORDERED DESTROYED! SO MY COMPANIONS FLED!

From Gold Key's SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON #4, by Dan.

was supposed to be about a couple of cabin boys and a sailing ship that went around somewhere off the East Coast. And I submitted the work to the syndicate, and they liked it. But the problem was that just a year before, the syndicates had picked up on two sea strips. One was called CHRIS CRAFT, and it was about a detective who chased criminals on a Chris Craft. *(Laughter.)* Then there was another one, which I forget the name of, but I think it was something about a buccaneer. Anyway, both of them failed within less than a year, I guess. And they said, "Once the newspapers who bought the idea are burned, it's hard to get them interested in that genre again." So they were not interested, because of that. But I hung on, and they felt, oh, someday I might try it again, you know. But other things came along, and you get busy, and you just sort of put it behind and forget about it.

LOU: *Yeah, you're busy making a living. Of course, in the mid-'50s, you went to work for Western, which was published through Dell Comics at the time. What was it like working for them? Were you working for Chase Craig at that time?*

DAN: Yeah, **Chase Craig**, **Del Connell** too. **Del Connell** came up with the idea for SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON. I drew those characters for him, and we sort of collaborated on that.

LOU: *Did Del write it?*

DAN: Yeah, Del wrote it. It was his idea all the way. And that thing was very popular. It was one of the longest-running comic books in the industry. It ran for, I think, about 45 monthly issues.

LOU: *Yeah, that was a long one for a Gold Key adventure book. Of course, they had the conflict with the LOST IN SPACE TV show, which came up a few years later. They also had a family of lost astronauts named Robinson.*

DAN: Gold Key, or Western, was going to sue CBS over this, because after all, it was their idea first. And then their lawyers said, "Don't cut off your nose to spite your face. You're doing a lot of other CBS stuff as adaptations." So they decided to continue the series as — what did they call it?

LOU: *SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON LOST IN SPACE.*

DAN: Right. At first, it was just SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON, and then they added the CBS title.

LOU: *And that way, at least, nobody was suing each other over it.*

DAN: Yeah.

LOU: *One of the things I did note is that, of the westerns, you said your favorite was MAVERICK. Any reason why?*

DAN: Well, I met **James Garner**. At the very beginning, we had no photographs of him. The show was so new, and the company felt that it was a hot item. So they sent me out to Warner Bros., and I got to meet him on the set. And I did a few sketches of him at the time. For the first MAVERICK book, I used those sketches as a basis for drawing him. Later, of course, I got all the photographs I needed as the production continued.

LOU: *Did you have to have pounds and pounds of photos to use as references for all those TV adaptations you did?*

DAN: Yeah, you did. Sometimes you'd get a lot; sometimes you'd get very little. I did quite a few Disney movies, and they were pretty good about sending me photographs. I'd cut 'em all up and get three-quarter views and profiles and so on of the characters, paste 'em up on a page, and try to make sense out of 'em that way as a story. It worked out pretty well.

LOU: *Did Disney ever give you folks any feedback about those?*

DAN: No. They were fairly well satisfied. Usually, if they didn't say anything, that meant they were pleased. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *I've been reading a book about Al Capone recently, so I have to ask if you*

“I met James Garner. We had no photos of him.”

recall anything about doing THE UNTOUCHABLES comic.

DAN: Oh, yeah. I did quite a few UNTOUCHABLES books, as I recall. And that was fun, because I like doing period stuff, where I can go back and look up all the old cars and the clothes they wore back then, and so on.

LOU: *And machine guns.*

DAN: Yeah. It was always fun.

LOU: *I think the first place that I remember encountering your work was on the three-issue GREEN HORNET series in the mid-'60s from Gold Key. I specifically remember the Chinatown sequences you did in the second issue, because the scenery was so well done. Do you remember anything about working on THE GREEN HORNET?*

DAN: Yeah. There again, that was one of those cases where we had no photographs at the beginning, and it was a hot item. So they sent me out to the studio, and I met **Van Williams,** who played The Green Hornet on TV, and **Bruce Lee.**

LOU: *You met Bruce Lee? Any impressions?*

DAN: I have his autograph, and a sketch that I made of him, and a **Van Williams** sketch as well.

LOU: *Oh, golly!*

DAN: Yeah, **Bruce Lee** was an amazing guy. I asked him how he could spin around and kick at a person without touching him, or hurting him. And he said, “Well, hold your hand up about head-high.” And I did, and he spun around and kicked up there. And I could feel the breeze, but he didn't touch my hand! *(Laughter.)* He was really accurate. A real neat guy.

LOU: *That's cool. I didn't know you got to meet those fellows.*

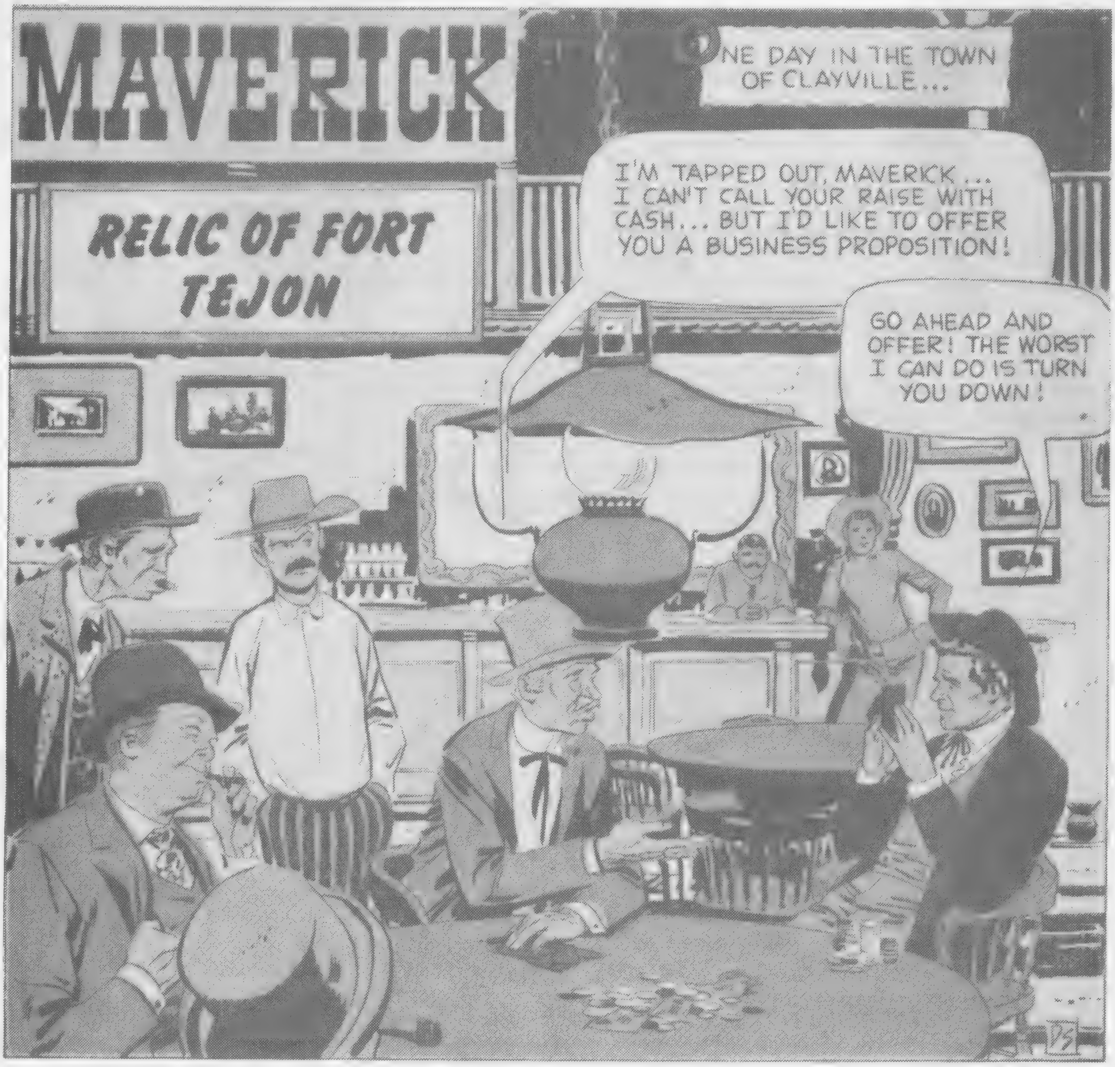
DAN: Yeah, they had a lunch break, and we were sitting outside, and that's when I got to ask him about that.

LOU: *Was Del Connell the writer on the GREEN HORNET book, or do you have any idea at this late date?*

DAN: I really don't. They would farm out these movie and TV scripts, and somebody would cut them down to comic-book size.

LOU: *You also had a decent run on*

Dell Comics' adaptation of TV's MAVERICK, starring James Garner, from FOUR COLOR COMICS 930, is a Spiegle masterpiece.


MAVERICK
RELIC OF FORT TEJON
ONE DAY IN THE TOWN OF CLAYVILLE...
I'M TAPPED OUT, MAVERICK ... I CAN'T CALL YOUR RAISE WITH CASH... BUT I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU A BUSINESS PROPOSITION!
GO AHEAD AND OFFER! THE WORST I CAN DO IS TURN YOU DOWN!
DS

"That KORAK script I drew was by Mark Evanier."

KORAK, SON OF TARZAN, both the Gold Key version and in a version that I've seen which only ran in the overseas markets. I liked it quite a bit. Do you have any memories of working on KORAK?

DAN: Not particularly. That was really not my favorite book. I would do it, you know, but to me it was a little boring.

LOU: *Was it about this time that you started working with your friend, my friend, and everybody's friend, Mark Evanier?*

DAN: Well, that was when we did SCOOBY-DOO for Marvel. That's when I met Mark. I really enjoyed his work, the stories, the humor that he always puts in. So I knew I really wanted to work with him from the very beginning, and we would always try to do things together. And later, that KORAK strip for the overseas market that I drew was written by Mark. Those were more enjoyable. I just like his ideas for stories.

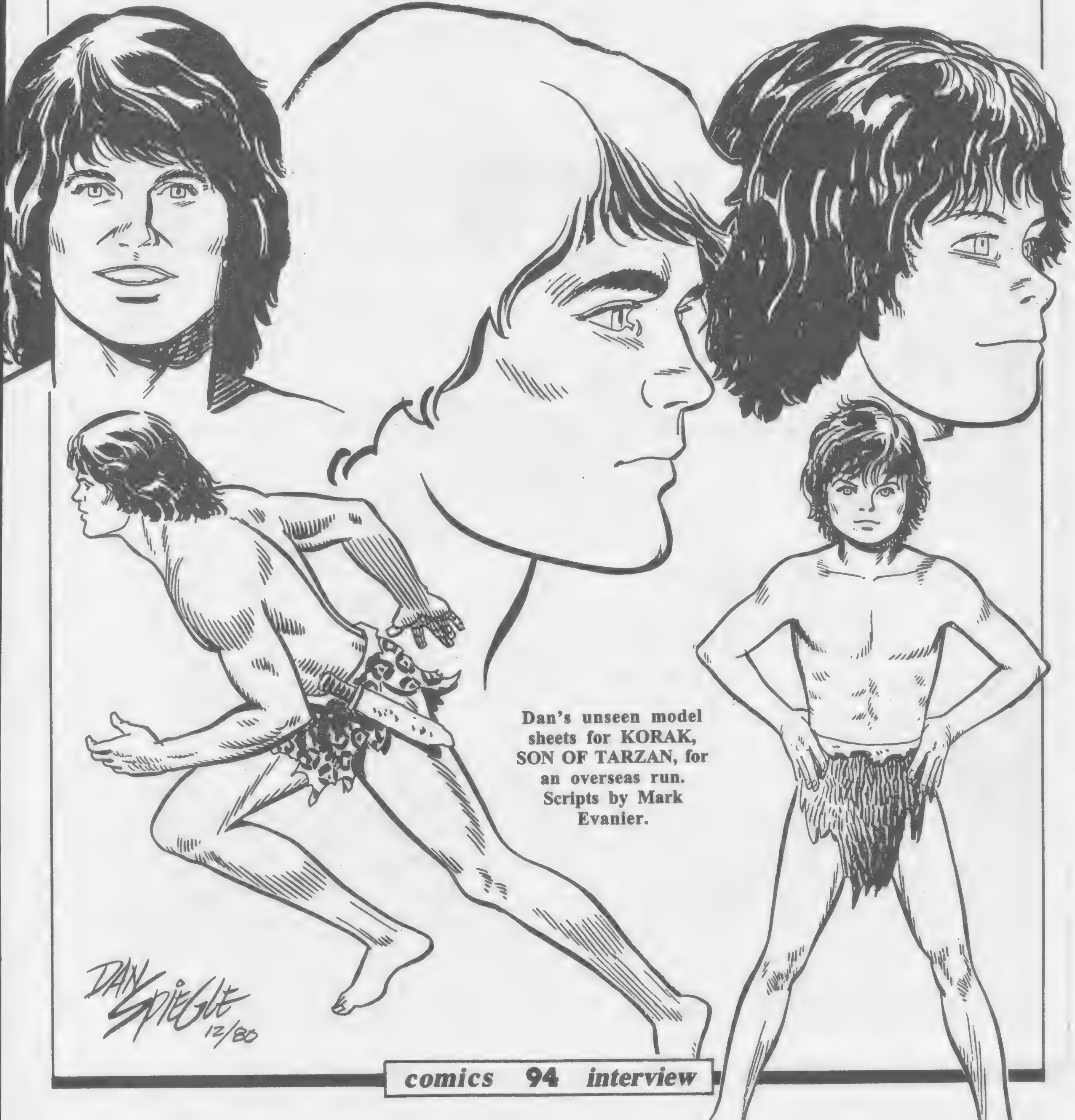
LOU: *Yeah, he's a very entertaining writer.*

DAN: He really is.

LOU: *Before we move off totally from the Dell/Gold Key/Whitman stuff, how about something on a few of the '70s things you did, such as MAGNUS, TRAGG, or THE BLACK HOLE?*

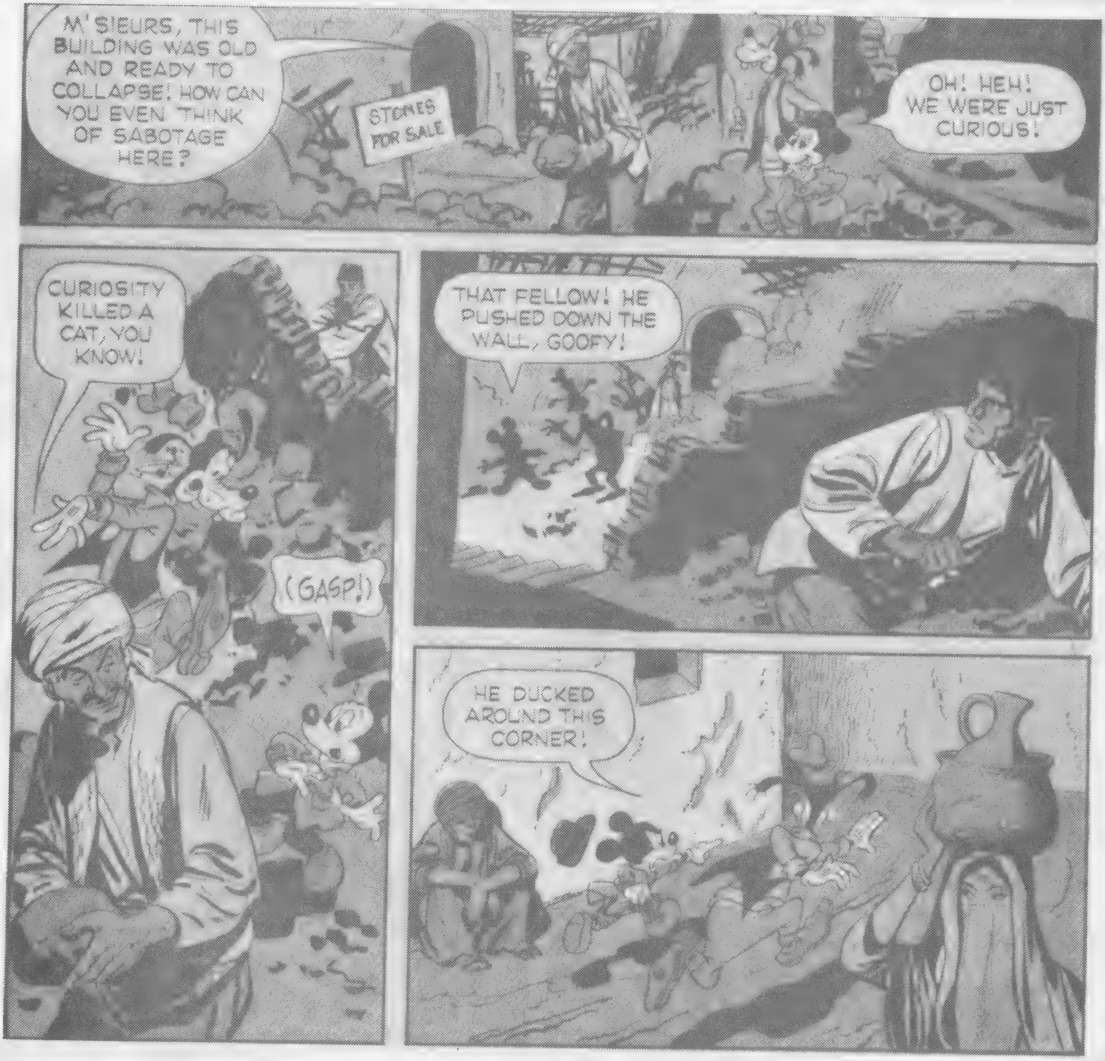
DAN: Well TRAGG was not my favorite either. *(Laughter.)* I don't care for that kind of stuff. I did like working on THE BLACK HOLE. That was fun. It was a Disney movie, and I enjoyed all the Disney movies I did. I did the HERBIE, THE LOVE BUG series, and — oh, gosh, there were so many. There was that one about a cat —

LOU: *THAT DARN CAT?*



Dan's unseen model sheets for KORAK, SON OF TARZAN, for an overseas run. Scripts by Mark Evanier.

"Mickey Mouse, Secret Agent: I did the realistic stuff."


M'SIEURS, THIS BUILDING WAS OLD AND READY TO COLLAPSE! HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK OF SABOTAGE HERE?
STONES FOR SALE
OH! HEH! WE WERE JUST CURIOUS!
CURIOSITY KILLED A CAT, YOU KNOW!
(GASP!)
THAT FELLOW! HE PUSHED DOWN THE WALL, GOOFY!
HE DUCKED AROUND THIS CORNER!

Dan did the "Super Secret Agent" series in Gold Key's MICKEY MOUSE. This is from #107.

DAN: I guess that was it. And there were so many others, like SPIN AND MARTY.

LOU: *That was on the MICKEY MOUSE CLUB, right?*

DAN: Right. I did several of the characters from the MICKEY MOUSE CLUB. And then, what's her name, the gal with the parasol? *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *You did the adaptation of MARY POPPINS?*

DAN: Yeah! I did the MARY POPPINS comic book. That was one of my favorites. It turned out really well.

LOU: *How did you do the bit where they had the cartoon overlay, when Dick Van Dyke and Julie Andrews were doing things and they had the Disney cartoon characters superimposed on the scene? Did you have to mix styles on that one?*

DAN: No. What I did there was that I pencilled those pages and sent them down to Disney, and they had an animator put in the cartoons. Then they sent them back to me, and I inked everything else, the realistic people and backgrounds and stuff. I did that also on a couple of books for Western of MICKEY MOUSE —

LOU: *Yeah, MICKEY MOUSE, SECRET AGENT!*

DAN: Yeah, I did all the realistic stuff on those and an animator did the Mickey Mouse character against those backgrounds.

LOU: *Paul Murry, I think. I thought those were a lot of fun. In the early '80s or so, Whitman more or less folded their tent, and you and Mark ended up at places like Eclipse and DC. Was CROSSFIRE one of your first projects together at that time?*

DAN: Yeah. First was BLACKHAWK for DC, and Mark and I worked on that one. We did quite a few issues of that, and it was fairly well popular with a small group of readers. *(Laughter.)* Let's put it that way.

LOU: *Like me!*

DAN: The people that liked it really liked it. But there were still a lot who didn't buy it. But it was fun. I liked it because of all the war planes, and the equipment and everything. I had done a couple of SGT. ROCK books for DC and had enjoyed that, and this was along the same lines. So BLACKHAWK was fun.

LOU: *That's my favorite version of the character, by the way.*

DAN: Oh, thank you.

LOU: *And that's taking in a lot of territory, definitely.*

“Mr. E was a fun one to do because of beingblind.”

DAN: I'll say! That thing has been run a lot of times.

LOU: *Yeah. They keep running it and hoping it'll stay around each time.* (Laughter.) *But I do think you guys did an admirable job on that one, both in writing and art. And the UNKNOWN SOLDIER stuff came around that time, right?*

DAN: Yeah, THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER was the first book that I did for DC. Then I did some backup stories, eight-pagers, featuring Nemesis.

LOU: *Nemesis, yeah. That was in BRAVE AND BOLD. The detective guy.*

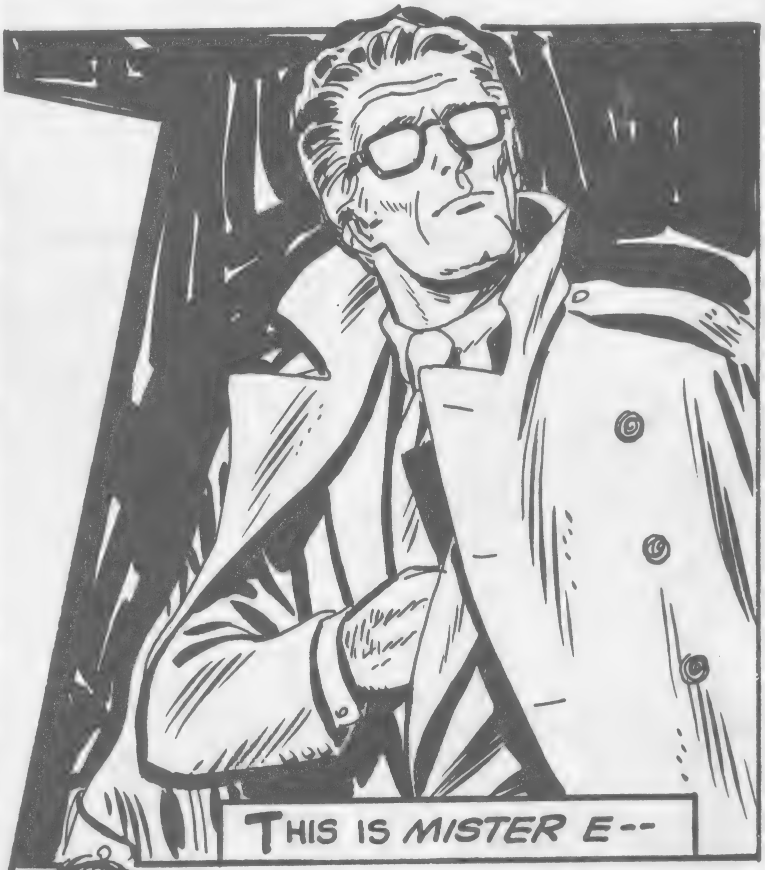
DAN: Yeah. And I did — what was the blind guy?

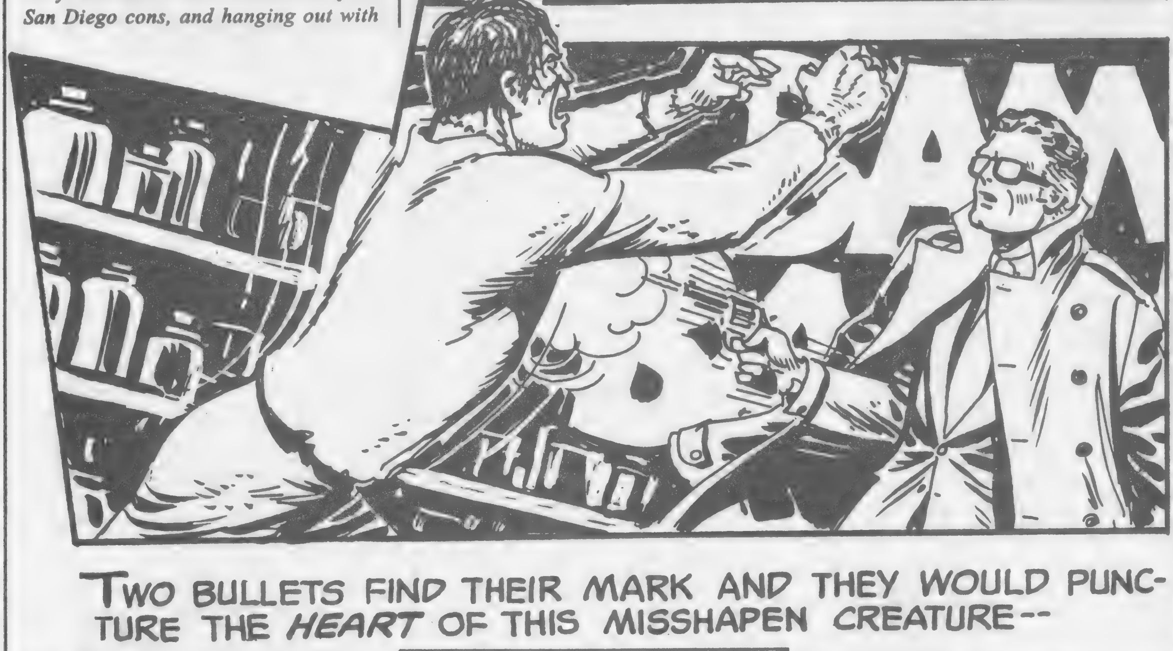
LOU: *Oh, Mister E.*

DAN: Yeah, Mister E. That was a fun one to do, because of him being blind and us having to make it possible for a blind person to do all the things he had to do. It was kind of a challenge, and I like challenges. I liked Nemesis the best. That was a fun one. It kinda reminded me later of CROSSFIRE. It was kind of similar to CROSSFIRE in a way.

Those are my favorite kinds of stories. CROSSFIRE, really, I loved that. I thought that was the greatest. And Mark and I still would like to revive the character, if we can find a company that will pay enough. *(Laughter.)* There's been several offers, but really not good enough yet. Mark is so busy that it's got to be a good deal, or it's not worth doing.

LOU: *Yeah, CROSSFIRE was one of my favorites, too. In fact, I'll tell you a true story. Mark and I were around one of the San Diego cons, and hanging out with some young pro artists. These guys were "names," and Mark had one of your double-page spreads from CROSSFIRE, and showed it to some of these young turks. And those guys were sitting around, oohing and ahhing, and poring over it, and describing every last little detail of it, going, "Gosh, look how he*




TWO BULLETS FIND THEIR MARK AND THEY WOULD PUNCTURE THE HEART OF THIS MISSHAPEN CREATURE--

"I looked better than I thought I was! *(Laughter.)*"

did that!" for a good thirty minutes, or so it seemed. And these were the people who are idolized by some fans now.

DAN: Isn't that funny? Because people will see things in there that I don't notice. *(Laughter.)* They say I did this because of this and that, and I don't think I did. At least, I don't remember that I did.

LOU: *"I'm glad you told me that! I didn't know!"* (Laughter.)

DAN: Yeah! I looked better than I thought I was! *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *One of the bits I liked most in the CROSSFIRE series was the WHODUNIT spin-offs you did, the mystery things. Those drove me crazy trying to figure them out.*

DAN: I thought WHODUNIT was a clever idea. That was Mark's idea, of course. I thought it was a good one.

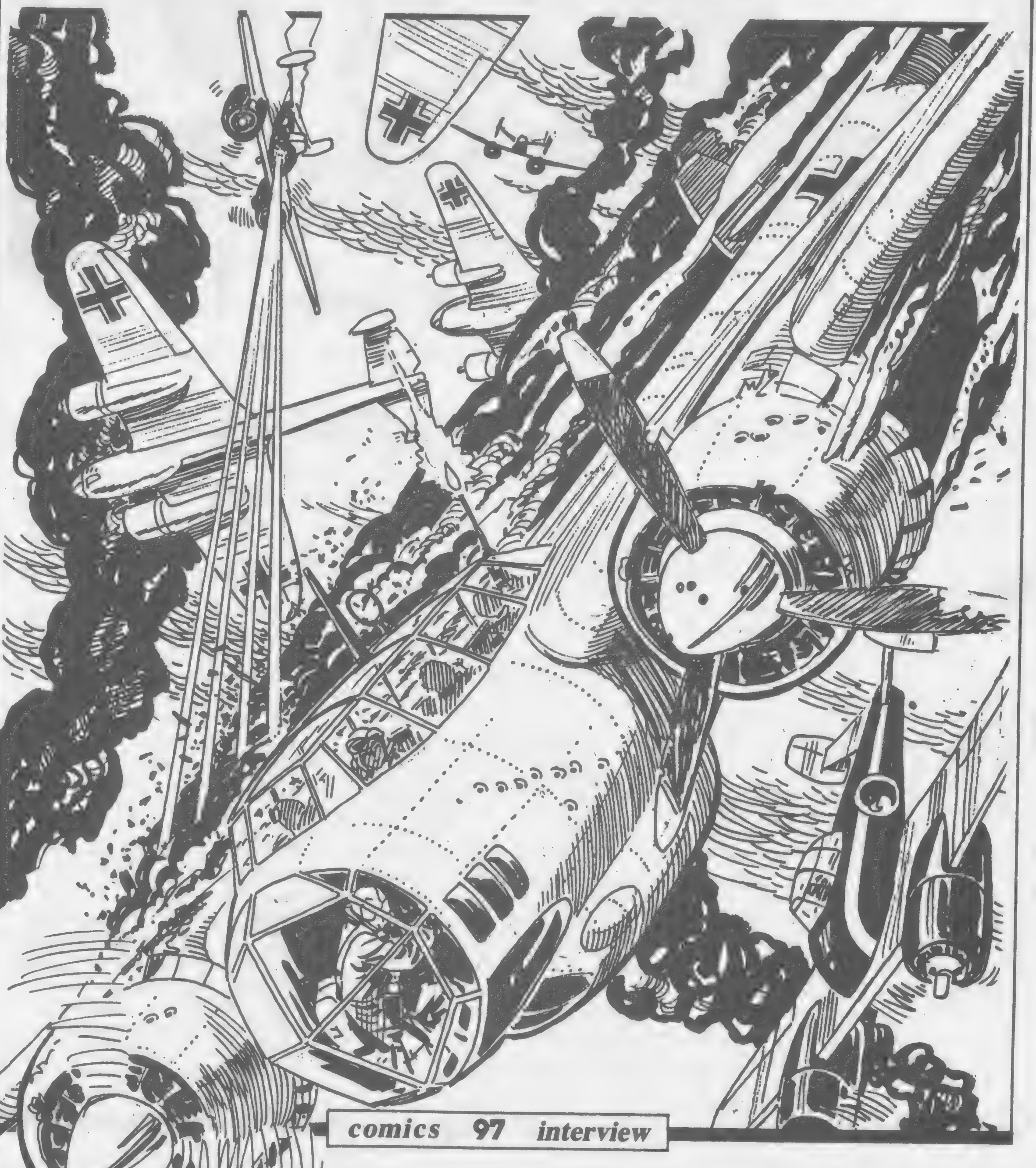
LOU: *Did you ever figure out the mystery before Mark told you?*

DAN: You know, I was so busy drawing it I never paid any attention! *(Laughter.)* Just one page at a time. But I also liked CROSSFIRE AND RAINBOW. I thought Rainbow was neat, and I enjoyed drawing her and her sort-of love affair with Crossfire. I thought that was a good idea, and I would have liked to see more of that series.

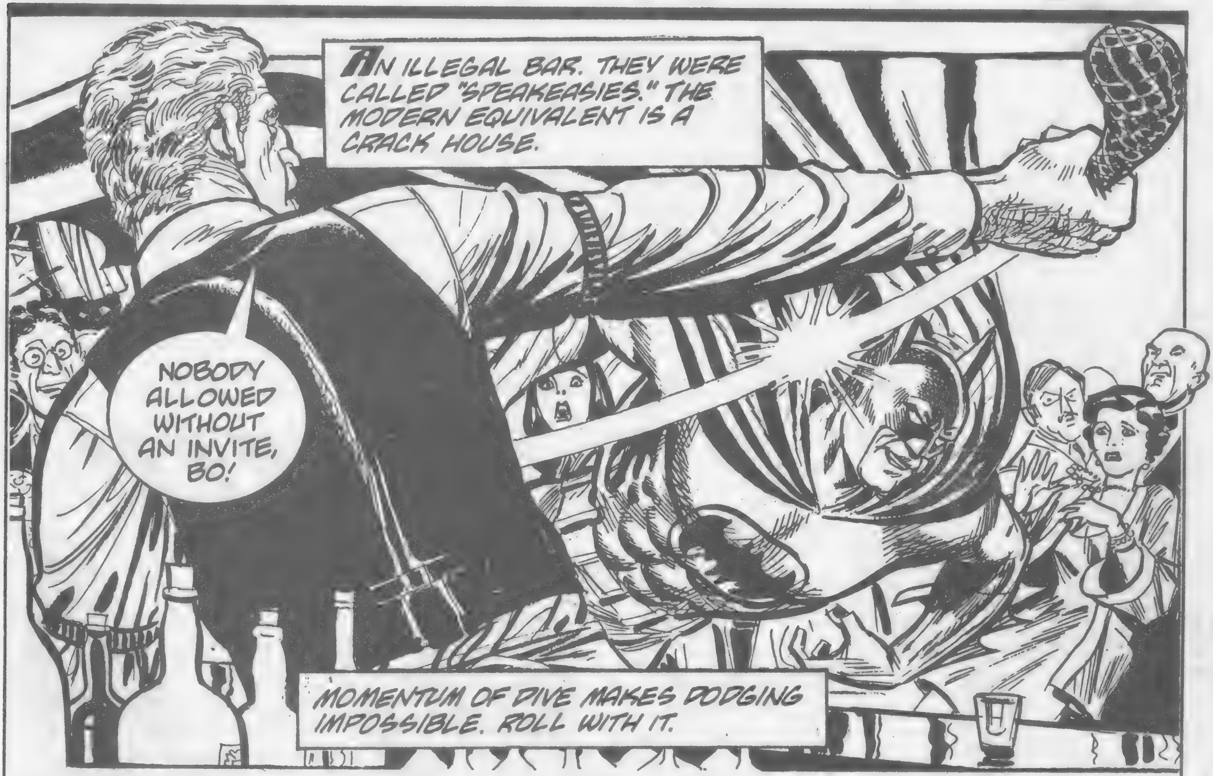
LOU: *How about your SKYWOLF strip in AIRBOY?*

DAN: Yeah, that was very enjoyable. I really enjoyed that, because that was, again, military aircraft and that sort of

Another war classic from Dan at DC — BLACKHAWK. Dan did pencils and inks.



"I don't think I'll ever work for Marvel again."


AN ILLEGAL BAR. THEY WERE CALLED "SPEAKEASIES." THE MODERN EQUIVALENT IS A CRACK HOUSE.
NOBODY ALLOWED WITHOUT AN INVITE, BO!
MOMENTUM OF DIVE MAKES DODGING IMPOSSIBLE. ROLL WITH IT.

Dan's BATMAN work appeared in the DARK KNIGHT title. Again, he did complete art.

thing, and the Korean War, and all. It was a good one, and I enjoyed it.

LOU: *And one of the series you did with Mark that I really enjoyed was HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTARS for Epic. How's about something on that one?*

DAN: Well, that, to me, was the big disappointment for both of us. Because we sold it to Marvel, and I don't know, but I don't think I'll ever work for Marvel again. They used the cheapest paper in this book, paper like you'll find in the Sunday newspaper. The color was terrible; it was really bad color. All the shading was done in a dirty brown. They shaded part of a face in dirty brown, and it didn't make sense. To me, it just ruined the whole looks of the book. Now, maybe the art and the story were not the greatest, and maybe that's the reason it didn't sell. I'm not saying that it wasn't. All I'm saying is that it didn't give us that much of a chance. It was not well produced.

LOU: *Yeah. Just kind of something they did over lunch.*

DAN: It was almost like it was kind of an afterthought by them. They were not that interested in it. I think that they made up their mind beforehand that it was something they didn't care for, and therefore it didn't go.

LOU: *Well, how did you end up getting the ROGER RABBIT graphic novel for Disney?*

DAN: Somebody just called me, and suggested it. *(Laughter.)* So I enjoyed that. It was a challenge again, doing the realistic part and having somebody else do the rabbit. Of course, the cartoons really made it look good, and it turned out fine.

LOU: *One of the recent things that you did that has been one of my favorites was the TRUE CRIME books you did for Eclipse. Can you tell me something about those?*

DAN: Oh, yeah! Those were interesting. We tried not to glorify crime; I think it came off pretty well because of that. But the idea was good. I liked this kind of idea of taking authentic crime stories and doing something with them. And another thing before we get off on it, I did some work for TSR. Have you seen that?

LOU: *No. I've heard of it. AGENT 13, right?*

DAN: Yeah, AGENT 13. Now, that was a really good book. We did two books, and I thought they turned out great. The color was excellent, and they gave us good paper, and it was very well done.

LOU: *Who was the writer?*

DAN: I used to know. He's a guy I haven't thought of in years. *(Laughter.)* But, yeah, I thought the writing was very well done, and I enjoyed the whole thing. If it's a good story, it really inspires you.

LOU: *One of the things I wanted to ask about the TRUE CRIME books is, did you have to dig up somebody who could supply you with a lot of photos on, say, John Gatti or somebody, before you could do the story?*

DAN: Yeah. They sent me some scrap they had at Eclipse. The writer probably had some. Then I purchased a couple of books on the mobs of that era and all. Between all of us I came up with fair likenesses, good enough to pass.

LOU: *Well, I enjoyed them because I like true crime comics like that, sort of a throwback to CRIME DOES NOT PAY.*

DAN: And they kind of reminded me of THE UNTOUCHABLES, which was a fun series.

LOU: *I hope you didn't get any Black Hand notices in the mail after you did. it.* (Laughter.) *What do you think was your most notable achievement in comics?*

DAN: CROSSFIRE. I've gone back and looked at those books, and I still think it's my best work. And I'm sure it's because of Mark's writing. It really does inspire

"I would like CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED to come back."

you. And he would help me in certain places; he'd lay out certain pages where you'd bring in typeset and all, and this sort of stuff. He did that, and he'd have suggestions which enhanced the looks of the book tremendously.

LOU: *What's your pet peeve about comics? Do you have one?*

DAN: Well, too much superhero. They're driving it into the ground. And I keep saying, "Someday it's all going to fold." But I don't know. Maybe it won't. There's always a younger group coming along that loves that sort of thing. And as long as they love it, they'll keep producing it. But it's *bor-ring* to me!

LOU: *So you'd rather see more genres than just superheroes in the market?*

DAN: Yeah. I would like to see, for example, historicals. I would like to see CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED come back.

LOU: *Yeah, you did a couple of the new CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED.*

DAN: I did one, THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO. Then I did another, THE SEA WOLF, and the company folded before they bought it.

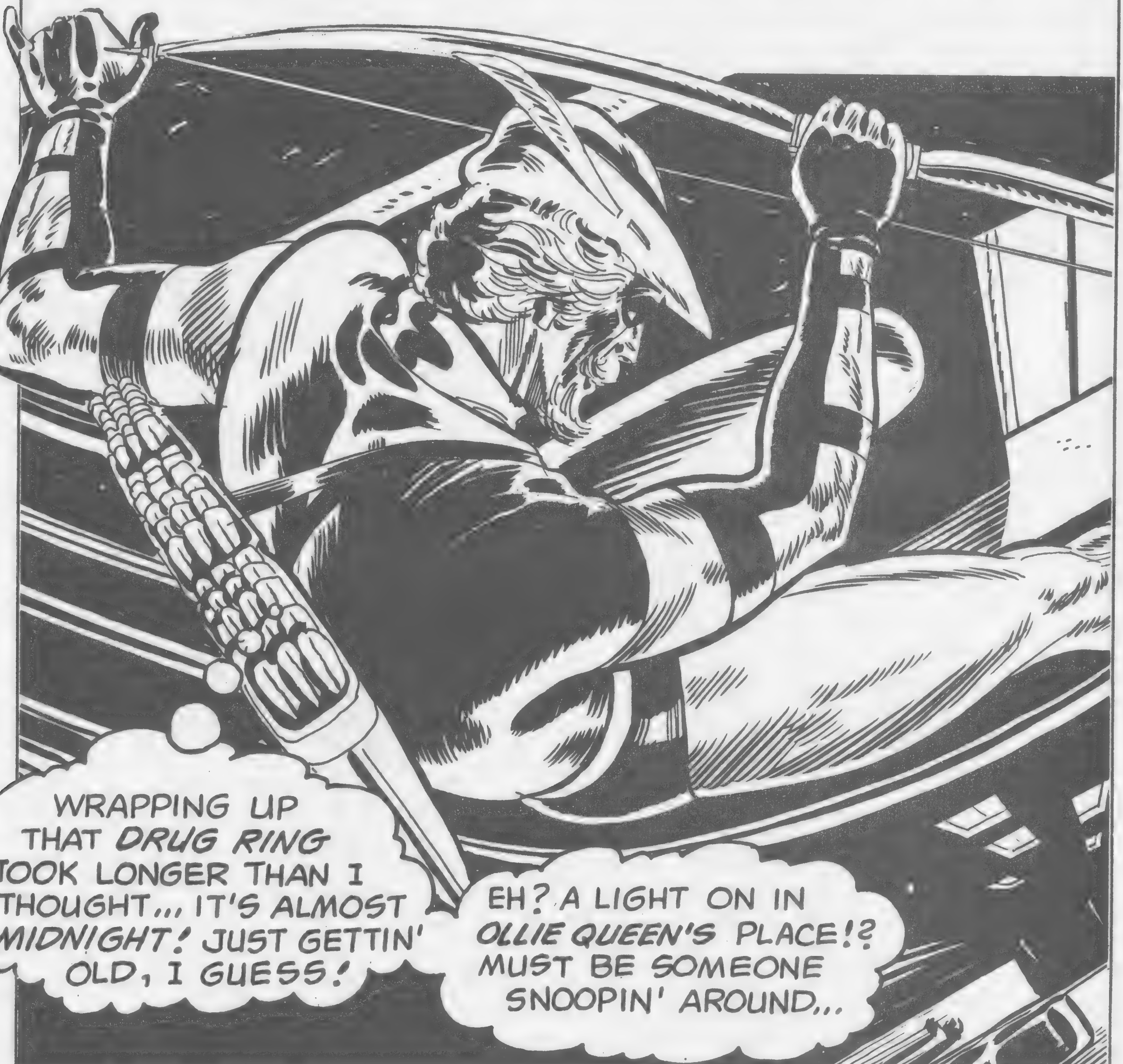
LOU: *All dressed up and no place to go, so to speak.*

DAN: Yeah. Classics International has taken over, but they're still trying to get their finances straight, so I don't know what'll ever come of that.

LOU: *Well, we'll keep our fingers crossed. Okay, Dan, why don't you tell me what you're working on now?*

DAN: What am I working on currently? Well, I'm working in INDIANA JONES for Dark Horse. This is the adventures of Indiana Jones, Senior, not the young kid. The latest story has **Sean Connery** in it as Indy's dad. And they're fun; they're really fun to do. That's my idea of a real comic strip. I'd love to do an Indiana Jones Sunday page. I wish they would go

Another DC Comics icon, Green Arrow, appears here in Spiegle style. This was shot from the original art.


WRAPPING UP THAT *DRUG RING* TOOK LONGER THAN I THOUGHT... IT'S ALMOST *MIDNIGHT!* JUST GETTIN' OLD, I GUESS!
EH? A LIGHT ON IN *OLLIE QUEEN'S* PLACE!? MUST BE SOMEONE SNOOPIN' AROUND...

"I play a lot of tennis during the week."

back to that. I think that it's about time we did have something with adventure in the newspaper strips.

Well, anyway, that's what I'm working on now.

Also, for DIC Entertainment, I'm doing a comic book on computers, where the storyline is that one of the kids has activated certain things in the scenes . . . but it's like a real comic book, and they have word balloons on the screen rather than people speaking. They do have sound effects, and there will be some sound in 'em. But these are about 40-page comic books, and they'll be on a tape.

LOU: *On a CD-ROM?*

DAN: Yeah.

LOU: *What's the name of it?*

DAN: Ah, okay, hang on, it's a long name. *(Laughter.)* It's just starting on television. It's SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER SQUAD. And there again, it's not my style. But I'm having fun with it anyway, because it's realistic. It has a group of kids and what they do, and how this one boy who's the main character is kind of sucked into the computer and fights these monsters and stuff.

LOU: *Kinda like TRON?*

DAN: Yeah. Stuff like that.

LOU: *Okay, any thoughts of what you've got planned for the future, Dan?*

DAN: Well, Mark and I are still hoping to do something again. We hope to revive CROSSFIRE. And DIC says they have a lot more of these types of computer stories that they would like to have me do, so I'll be working on that. And Dark Horse wants me to do some stuff. I'm doing this series of three INDIANA JONES books, and we'll see what happens after that. They'll be sold in a package, a continuing story through the three books.

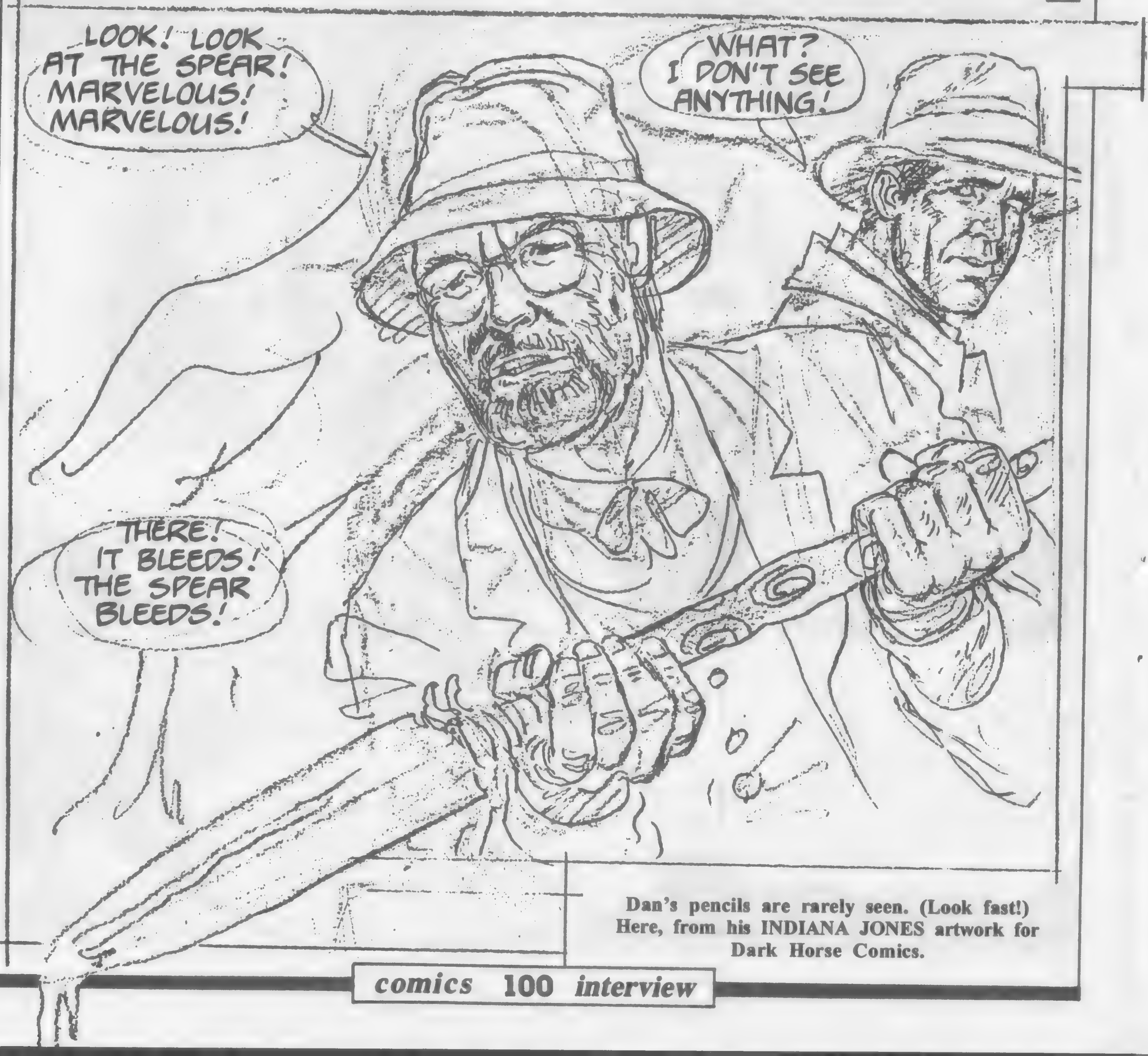
LOU: *So it doesn't look like you're going to be lacking for anything to do in the near future?*

DAN: No, I'm so busy right now that I was at my drawing desk when you called. I'm working on Sundays also. *(Laughter.)* It comes in bunches, and of course, everybody has a deadline. And I like to do it promptly when I can. It means long hours, but it's fun. I enjoy it.

I play a lot of tennis during the week, though. I get up early, about 5 a.m., and then I'll knock off around 3:30 or 4:00, go down to the club, and play tennis till about six.

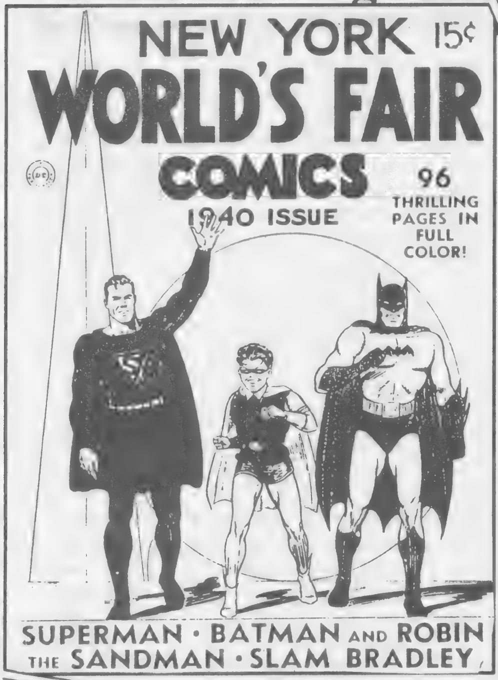
LOU: *Who's your favorite tennis partner?*

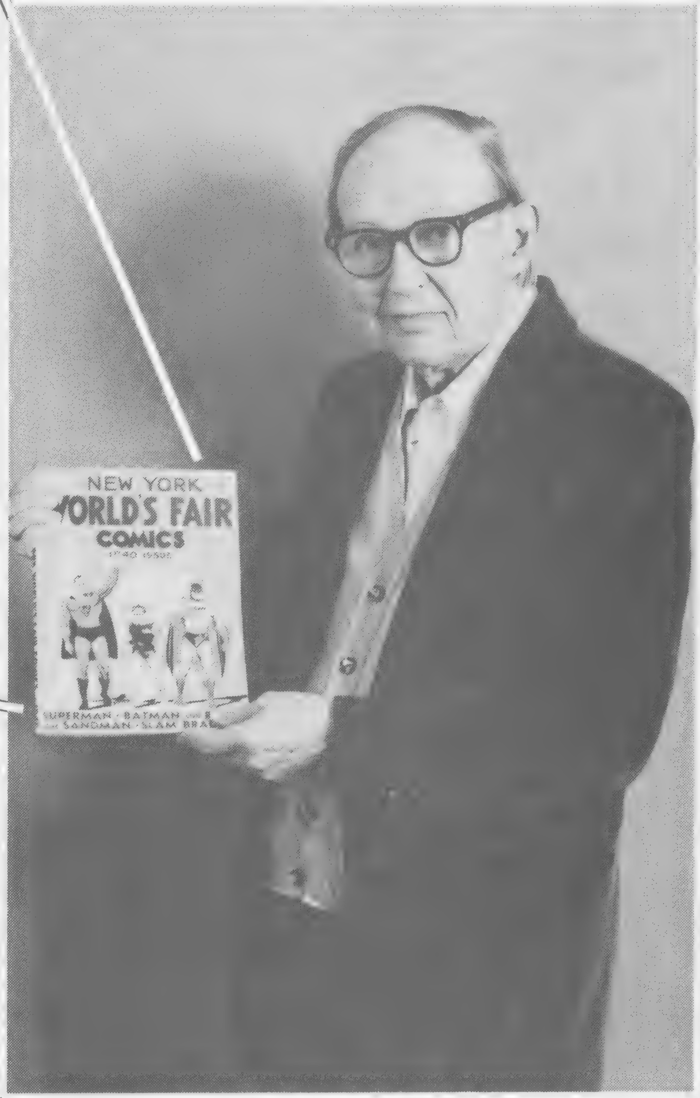
DAN: A good friend of mine, **Roy Whittaker,** whom I've known for years. We met down on the beach in Santa Monica playing two-man volleyball, and we've been friends ever since. He moved to Hawaii and then up here nearby, so we're able to play tennis, which he likes to do, too. We have a lot of fun.


LOOK! LOOK AT THE SPEAR! MARVELOUS! MARVELOUS!
WHAT? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING!
THERE! IT BLEEDS! THE SPEAR BLEEDS!

Dan's pencils are rarely seen. (Look fast!) Here, from his INDIANA JONES artwork for Dark Horse Comics.

"I was drawing cartoons far back as I can remember."


NEW YORK
15¢
WORLD'S FAIR
COMICS
1940 ISSUE
96 THRILLING PAGES IN FULL COLOR!
SUPERMAN · BATMAN AND ROBIN
THE SANDMAN · SLAM BRADLEY


NEW YORK
WORLD'S FAIR
COMICS
1940 ISSUE
SUPERMAN · BATMAN AND ROBIN
THE SANDMAN · SLAM BRADLEY

At right is our interview subject, holding up a double-first; above is an enlarged version of that double-first. The firsts? It's the first time Superman and Batman ever appeared in a scene together — and the first cover illustration by Jack Burnley.

JACK BURNLEY

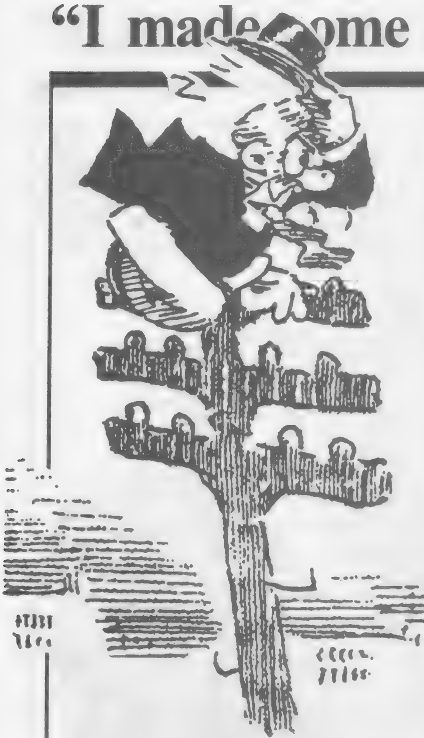
One of the true pleasures of interviewing comics pros from the Golden or Silver Age is the unlocking of human time capsules, Not only do you learn about the comics of a bygone age and about the people who made them — enough of a pleasure in itself — but you also learn the lore of an age before your own. You can see a documentary film on the earlier years of this century, or watch an old movie, or listen to an old radio show, but it's never the same as talking to somebody from that time before your own. Sometimes, I feel like the Studs Terkel of comic books.

I recently had that pleasure while interviewing Jack Burnley. If you know your Golden Age comics, you will recognize him as one of DC's greatest artists of the '40s. He created and drew the first Starman in ADVENTURE COMICS and ALL-STAR, drew Superman and Batman in the comics and then in their newspaper strips (all of the '40s BATMAN Sundays are by Burnley, save for one sequence by Kane and part of one by Win Mortimer), and did excellent covers for SUPERMAN, BATMAN, DETECTIVE, ACTION, ADVENTURE, and ALL-STAR, among others. Steranko, in his HISTORY OF COMICS, wrote: "Jack Burnley told Starman's tales with tastefully solid drawing that placed him among the comics' better draftsmen. His work epitomized DC's position and policies more than any other. Burnley's Superman set the pace for years afterward."

For years before, Jack Burnley had

Superman and Batman TM & ©1995 DC Comics, Inc.; all other characters and/or artwork accompanying this interview are TM & © their respective owners.

“I made some cartoon strips about a fighter.”



Jack's favorite cartoonists include Billy DeBeck (above) and George Herriman (below).

been a syndicated sports cartoonist, and saw and drew the Famous Names that documentaries were devoted to. For years after his tenure at DC, he was a newspaper artist and layout man, until his retirement in 1976. But his memories of the Golden Age of Comics are still green, and Jack was kind enough to share them with us in this exclusive interview . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Jack, most cartoonists that I've interviewed have told me that they can't remember when they didn't have a pencil in their hand and drawing with it. Was that pretty much the case with you?*

JACK BURNLEY: Yes, I guess that's true of most fellows with some artistic talent. I was drawing little cartoons for about as far back as I can remember.

LOU: *Did you have any favorite comic strips from around the 'teens, or whenever?*

JACK: Yes. That goes back to the early days of comic strips, when they were done in that real cartoony style. That was long before the adventure strips. My favorites at that time were **George Herriman** on KRAZY KAT and **Billy DeBeck** on BARNEY GOOGLE.

LOU: *For some reason, I was flashing on TOONERVILLE TROLLEY there, too.*

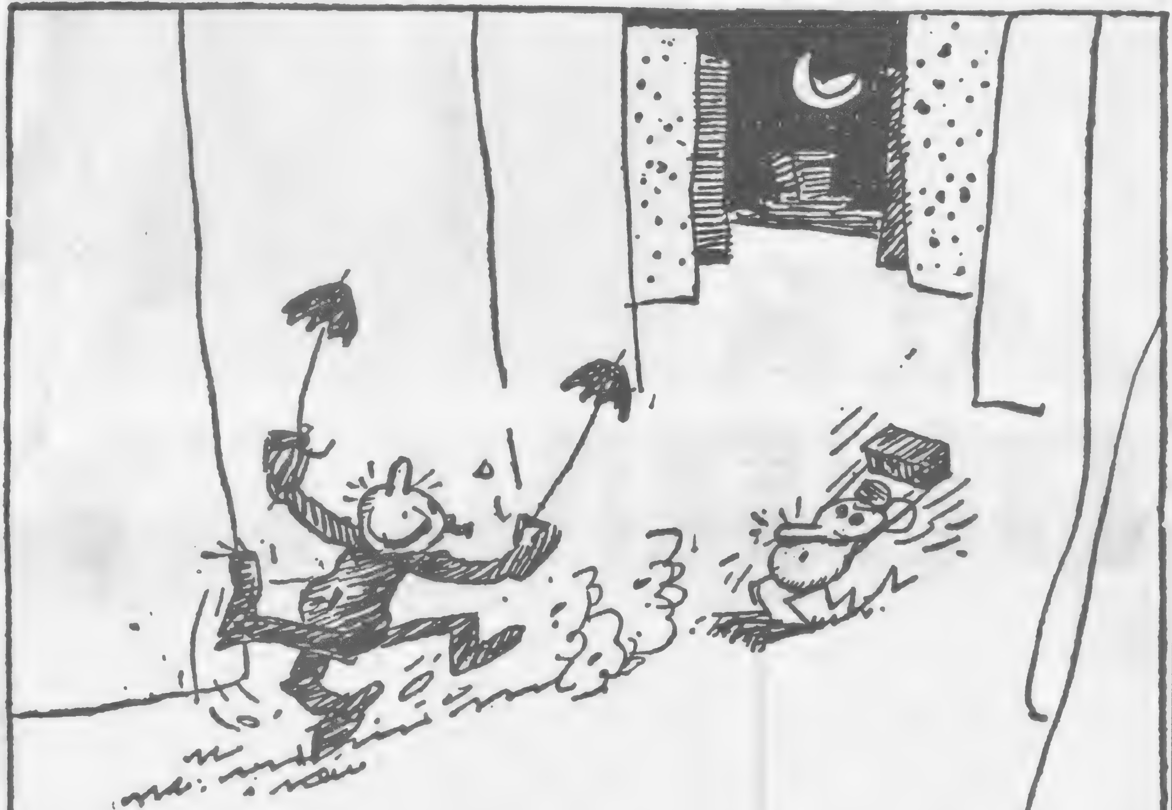
JACK: That was done in a very stylized form. The other cartoonists were actually better artists.

LOU: *Yeah, Herriman's one of my favorites from that time, too. The Twenties were a few years before the adventure craze hit the strips in the Thirties, I guess.*

JACK: Right.

LOU: *Okay, you were born in 1911. Steranko's HISTORY OF COMICS says that when you were 14, your sister took you up to King Features Syndicate, which must have been around 1925 or '26, am I right?*

JACK: Yes, that's right. She took me to see **Jack Lait.** He was a writer and an editor at the time. I was just a kid, still wearing knickers. Boys wore knickers then until they were about 15 or 16. I had made up some cartoon strips about a fighter. I loved sports, and I hung around



“I was the first to draw both Superman and Batman.”

WHEN SUPERMAN LOST HIS HEAD

by Jack Burnley

One day in the early ’40s I was at home working on some comic art when I got a hurry call for help from DC editor **Whit Ellsworth.** He said they needed some emergency patch-up work on a batch of Superman daily strips that had just come in from **Siegel** and **Shuster,** who lived in Cleveland.

When I arrived at the DC office, **Ellsworth** showed me the strips, which looked okay at first glance until he pointed to the heads on all the Superman figures. Something had gone wrong; Superman just did not look like himself. There was a subtle change in his facial features and the effect was disturbing. Had Superman lost his head?

The DC editor quickly gave me the reason for the mysterious transformation. At that time the SUPERMAN newspaper strip was drawn mainly by assistant artist **Wayne Boring,** who worked in Cleveland with **Siegel** and **Shuster. Boring** did all the figures and backgrounds except for Superman’s heads, which were still done by the originator, **Joe Shuster.** Well, **Shuster** was sick, so assistant **Boring** was suddenly forced to try his hand at drawing the Superman heads. Understandably, his first efforts were slightly off-target, which explained the puzzling change in Superman’s facial features.

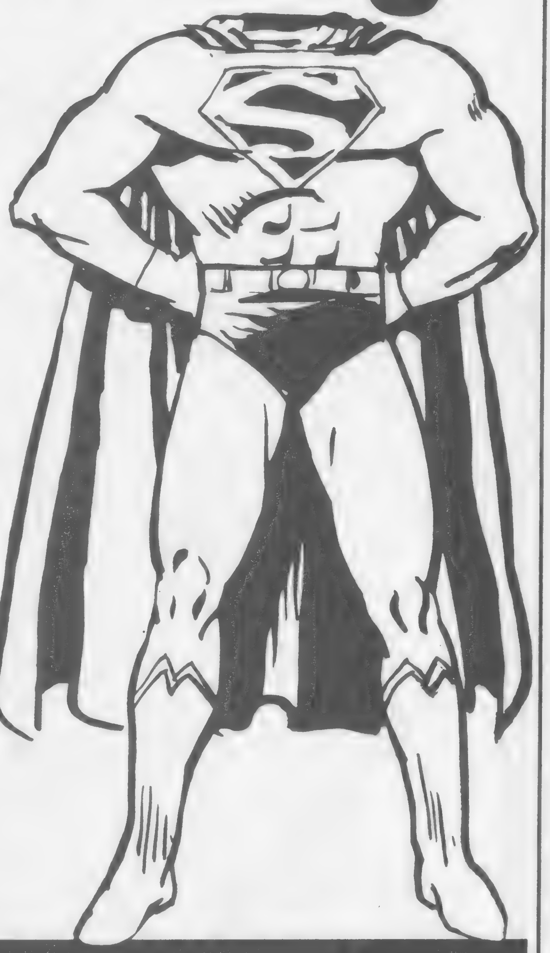
As I’d had a lot of experience drawing Superman covers, stories and commercial comics, I was able to restore the familiar Superman look with a little scissors-and-paste surgery, re-doing all the heads on thin bristol board, then cutting them out and pasting them down on the strips to match the figures.

That did it — Superman was himself again, and the DC editors were happy.

Needless to say, after that emergency **Wayne Boring** quickly mastered the knack of drawing Superman’s face.

Eventually, he took over the strip, and as far as I know Superman never lost his head again.

This bit of industry history, written by our interview subject, originally appeared in a 1970 fanzine published by Al Dellinges of San Francisco.



VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jack Burnley
Born: 11 January 1911 — New York City.
Family Configuration: Wife, Dolores; brother, Ray (also a DC artist); sister, Martine (former artist’s model).
Influences: Alex Raymond
Credits: Starman in ADVENTURE COMICS #61-80 and ALL-STAR COMICS #8-13; various Superman and Batman stories, 1940-47; BATMAN and SUPERMAN daily and Sunday newspaper strips, 1943-46; covers for ACTION, ADVENTURE, ALL-STAR, BATMAN, DETECTIVE, NEW YORK WORLD’S FAIR 1940, STAR-SPANGLED COMICS, SUPERMAN, and WORLD’S FINEST 1940-47; Bullet Bob in MIRACLE COMICS #4 (Hillman); plus sports cartoons for King Features Syndicate, *et al.*, 1925-38 and 1947-76.

Favorite Work: BATMAN Sunday newspaper strip

Favorite Strip by Somebody Else: Alex Raymond’s FLASH GORDON

“I had a boxing strip named CHARLIE AND JOE,

boxing gymnasiums and watched the fighters work out. I saw **Dempsey** work out when I was about. 10 or 11 years old. My older brother took me to see Dempsey train for his fight with **Bill Brennan** in Madison Square Garden, which was about 1921, somewhere like that.

LOU: *Was that in Stillman's Gym?*

JACK: No. Stillman's Gym I was around all the time. I used to go down there practically every day when I was a kid. But **Dempsey** didn't work out there for that fight. He worked out in an outdoor stadium that was used as a tennis court sometimes in the summer, and as a skating rink in the winter. It was also used as an outdoor movie theater. At any rate, they had a lot of seats around the ring, and **Dempsey** would work out there and they charged fifty cents for you to see him train. He had a big black sparring partner named **Bill Tate,** and he'd punch him around. I always enjoyed watching the fighters work out and box. I saw a lot of the great fighters of those days. I saw **Harry Grebb,** the fabulous middleweight champion, box. My brother took me to that fight, at the Polo Grounds.

LOU: *How's about Gene Tunney? Did you ever have a chance to see him in action?*

JACK: Yes. I saw him in the fight he had just before he went against **Dempsey.**

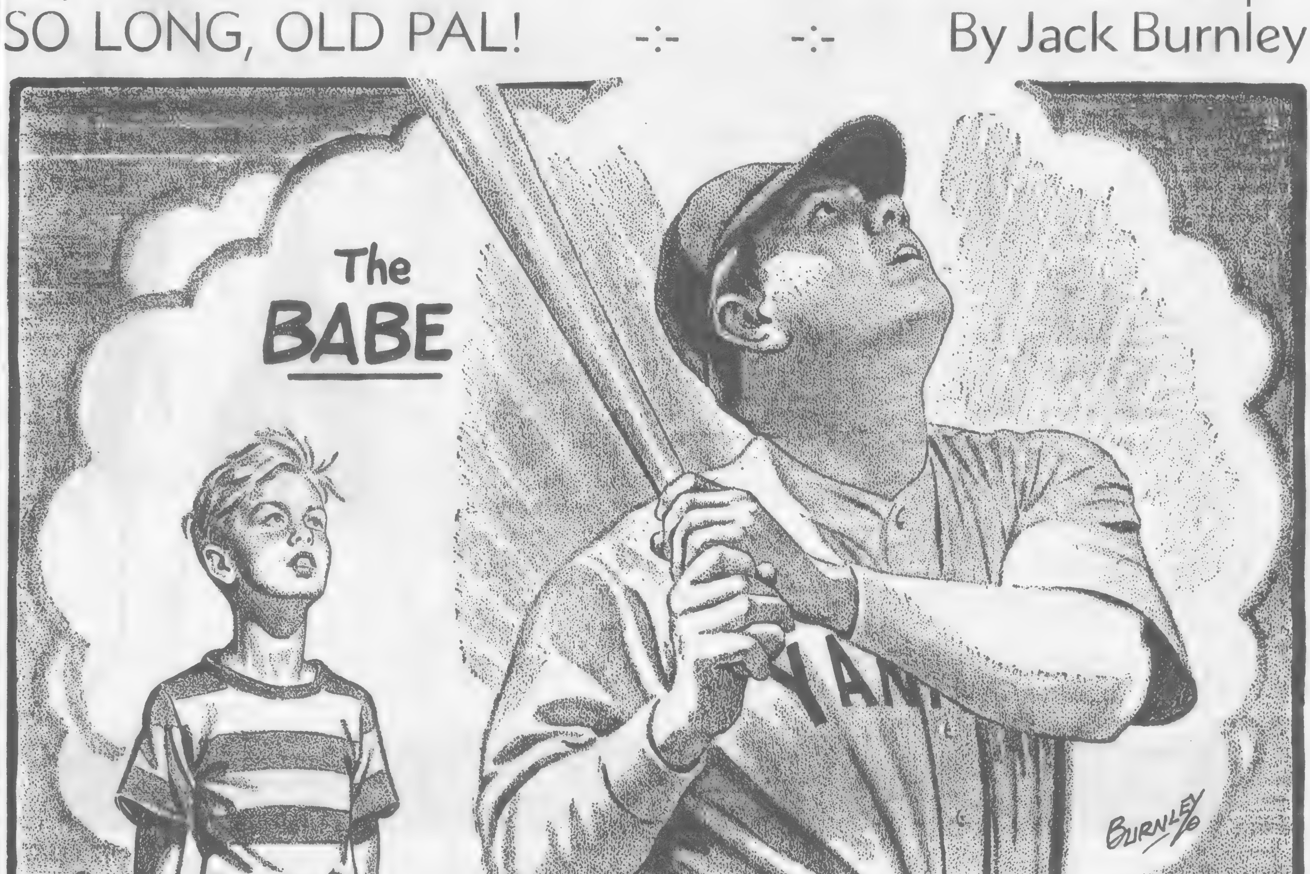
LOU: *Was your sister, who took you up to King, a model for a cartoonist at that time?*

JACK: She did some of that work. She was in show business at the time. She was a dancer, but she didn't get very far. But she did pose for artists who did magazine illustrations. **C.D. Williams** was one of them, and he was the fellow who told her to go see **Jack Lait** with me.

But at any rate, I had a boxing strip which I showed to **Lait,** It was named CHARLIE AND JOE, and the fighter in it was named Charlie Palooka.

LOU: *Ah!*

JACK: And later on, **Ham Fisher** took the same character and called it Joe Palooka. I believe he saw my strips *(Laughter)*, because I had given them to **Harry Hershfield,** the cartoonist, to look at. **Hershfield** was a friend of **Ham**



Here and facing page: These are only two of the myriad of sports greats who received the benefit of Burnley's brilliant brushwork, back in the heyday of the great sports cartoonists.

and the fighter in it was named Charlie Palooka.”

Fisher, who at the time was a salesman for a syndicate, I have no proof that he saw the strips, but it's kind of odd. The name “Palooka” is a common name for a ham-and-egg fighter. But the fact is that the characters were similar. There was a little manager with a mustache in my strip, and my fighter was a big, pug-nosed blond guy *(Laughter)*, who looked something like Joe Palooka later looked. So it's something of a coincidence.

LOU: *So, with your fighter named Palooka and his manager named Joe, it wasn't too hard a synthesis there. That's an interesting bit of untold comics history. But Jack Lait was the fellow who hired you basically to stand around there and learn, right?*

JACK: That's right. I was like an apprentice. He just figured that I was a good prospect, and he just signed me up to help out the cartoonists and pick up the technique that way.

LOU: *Do you remember some of the cartoonists' names there?*

JACK: Sure. The cartoonists that worked at King Features at that time, worked at the office. A lot of fellows that lived elsewhere worked at home and sent their work in. **Herriman** lived in California, and **Segar,** who did POPEYE, also sent his work in. But at the office there was **Cliff Sterrett,** who drew a feature called POLLY AND HER PALS. And **Chic Young** was also there. This was before he did BLONDIE. At that time, he was doing a strip called DUMB DORA.

LOU: *That was about a flapper, right?*

JACK: That's right. And **George McManus** [BRINGING UP FATHER] wasn't at the office all the time, but he lived in New York and came in periodically. **Russ Westover** was there, too. He did a strip called TILLIE THE TOILER.

LOU: *Oh, my gosh. My mother is the* ne plus ultra *TILLIE THE TOILER fan!*

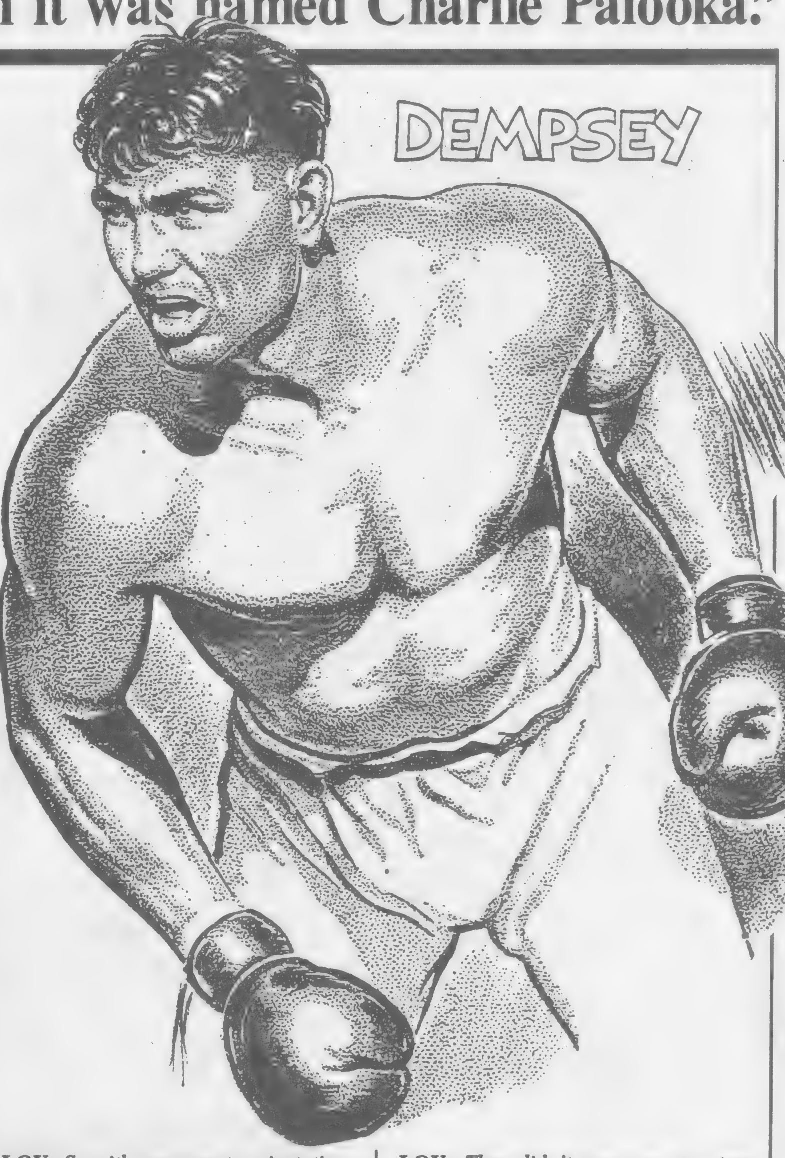
JACK: Yeah, he was there. He was a grey-haired fellow at that time, a jolly guy. He was a rather stout, amusing fellow. And there was **Walter Hoban,** who did a strip called JERRY ON THE JOB, which was not too popular. Of course, there was **Harry Hershfield,** who did a Jewish strip called ABIE THE AGENT.

LOU: *Yeah, Abe Kabibble, right?*

JACK: Right. So those were the fellows who I mainly used to see there, and I'd take my stuff in to them and ask for their criticism. It was an interesting experience, and I did learn a lot that way.

LOU: *I imagine from that crowd, you could learn quite a bit.*

JACK: Yeah.



LOU: *So with your sports orientation, you wound up doing the syndicated sports cartoon?*

JACK: That's right. I was the youngest artist to ever have a syndicated feature at that time, as far as I know. I had just turned 18. Unfortunately, my stuff didn't go into New York newspapers. King Features syndicated the stuff all over the country, but New York papers didn't use my work. Some big newspapers would have their own sports cartoonists, so they wouldn't use a syndicated feature. THE NEW YORK JOURNAL, for instance, had **Burris Jenkins, Jr.** for a sports cartoonist at that time. So they didn't use my work there. And that was kind of disappointing, because I wouldn't see my stuff in print! *(Laughter.)* It was going in San Francisco, or Chicago, or somewhere, but I didn't see it! I felt kind of disappointed about that.

LOU: *They didn't save you any tear sheets or anything?*

JACK: Oh, yes. I would get the proofs every week. But I wanted to see it in the paper, and show it to my friends and say, “Look, this is my stuff.” *(Laughter.)*

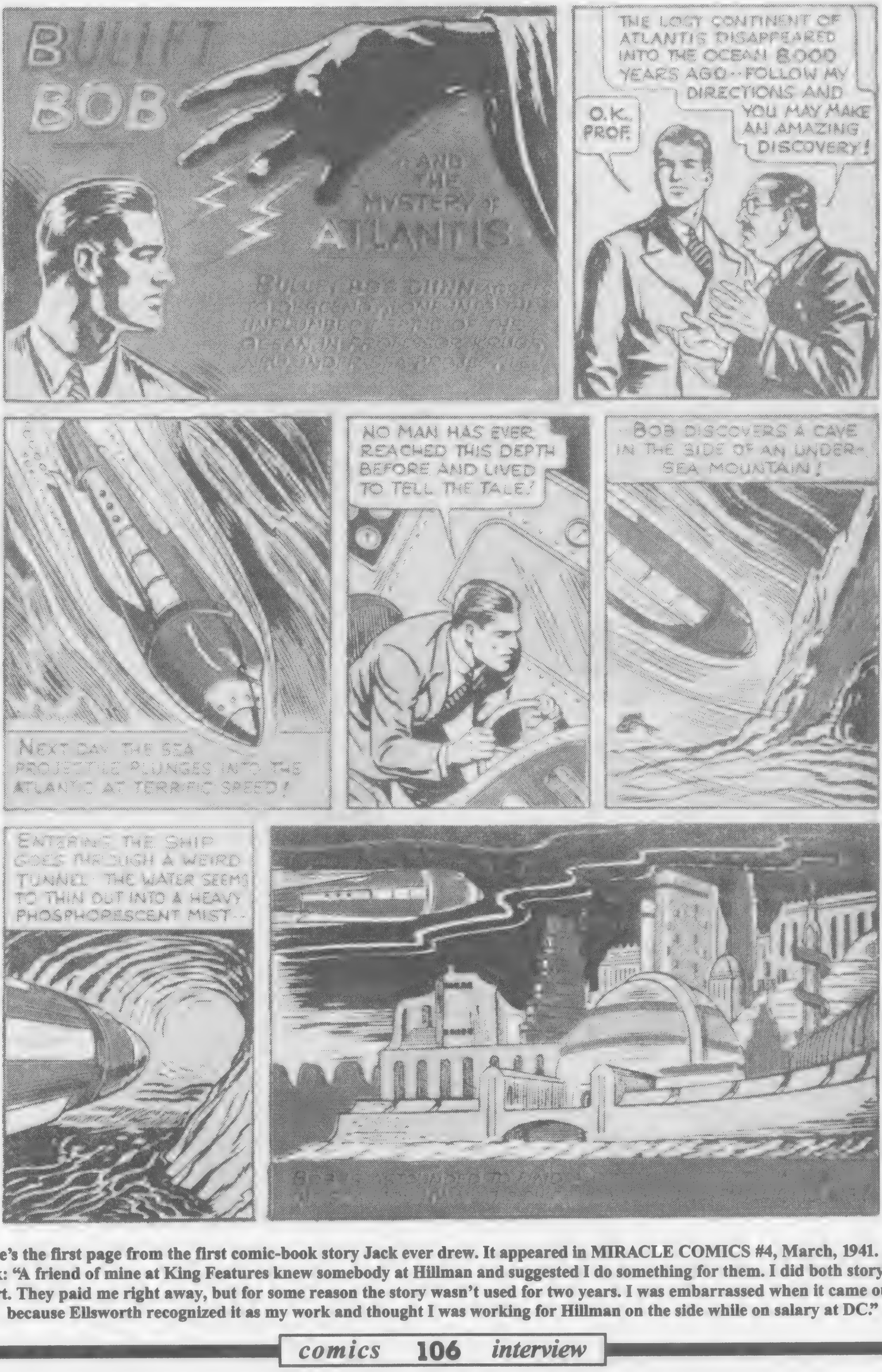
LOU: *Yeah, but it would never turn up in New York. Did you get to meet some of the sports people that you were doing, or did you just work from photographs?*

JACK: I worked from photographs. All the sports cartoonists of that time did. But, yeah, I met a lot of the boxers, because I was around them anyway. I had met some of them before I even had the syndicated feature, But I had ringside seats for all of the big fights, and I saw all of the great fighters of that time.

LOU: *That must have been neat.*

JACK: Yeah. And I was a member of the Baseball Writers Association, so I had a pass for all of the ball games at Yankee

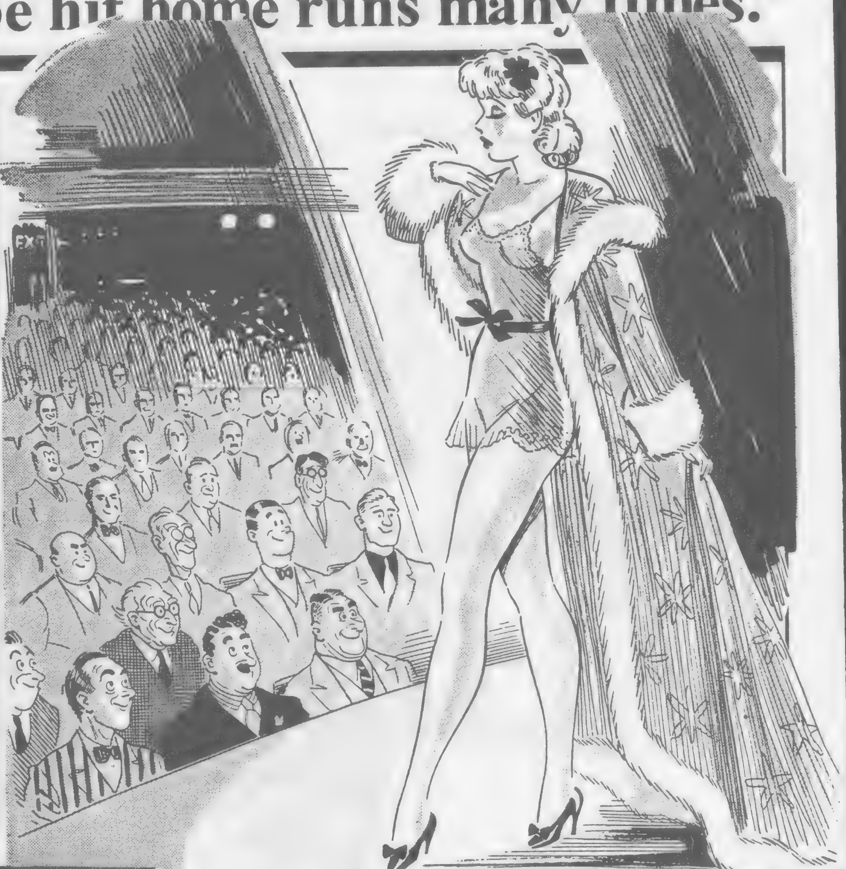
"I didn't want my art to be too realistic."

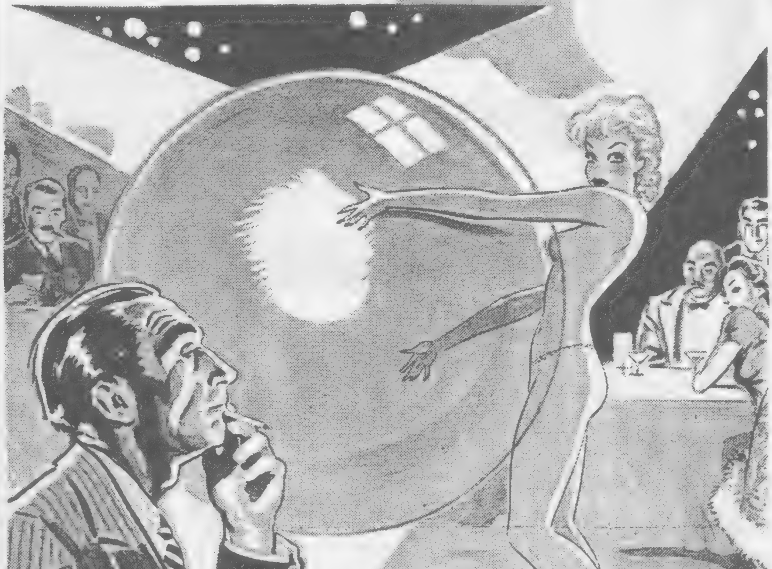

BULLET BOB
AND THE MYSTERY OF ATLANTIS
BULLET BOB DUNN
THE LOST CONTINENT OF ATLANTIS DISAPPEARED INTO THE OCEAN 8000 YEARS AGO--FOLLOW MY DIRECTIONS AND YOU MAY MAKE AN AMAZING DISCOVERY!
O.K., PROF.
NEXT DAY THE SEA PROJECTILE PLUNGES INTO THE ATLANTIC AT TERRIFIC SPEED!
NO MAN HAS EVER REACHED THIS DEPTH BEFORE AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE!
BOB DISCOVERS A CAVE IN THE SIDE OF AN UNDER-SEA MOUNTAIN!
ENTERING THE SHIP GOES THROUGH A WEIRD TUNNEL. THE WATER SEEMS TO THIN OUT INTO A HEAVY PHOSPHORESCENT MIST--

Here's the first page from the first comic-book story Jack ever drew. It appeared in MIRACLE COMICS #4, March, 1941. Says Jack: "A friend of mine at King Features knew somebody at Hillman and suggested I do something for them. I did both story and art. They paid me right away, but for some reason the story wasn't used for two years. I was embarrassed when it came out, because Ellsworth recognized it as my work and thought I was working for Hillman on the side while on salary at DC."

"I saw the Babe hit home runs many times."

Stadium and the Polo Grounds.
LOU: *Did you get to see Babe Ruth play?*
JACK: Oh, yes. I saw him play, saw him hit home runs many times.
LOU: *I imagine you saw him hit a home run every time you were there.*
JACK: *(Laughter.)* Pretty near,
LOU: *That must be something, to be present at an event we only see now in Ken Burns' Baseball films.*
JACK: Right, right.
LOU: *So you managed to become a sports cartoonist right in time for the Depression to hit you?*
JACK: That's true. Fortunately, because I was with a syndicate, I was never affected by the Depression except that I took a 10% salary cut. All of the artists that I know of agreed to take a 10% cut because of the bad situation. It hurt every business, of course. So many people were out of work and had a terrible time, but, fortunately, it didn't affect me.
LOU: *Well, I imagine the cartoonists were just glad they had a job that they could take a 10% cut from.*
JACK: Exactly.
LOU: *Were you working at King all through the '30s?*



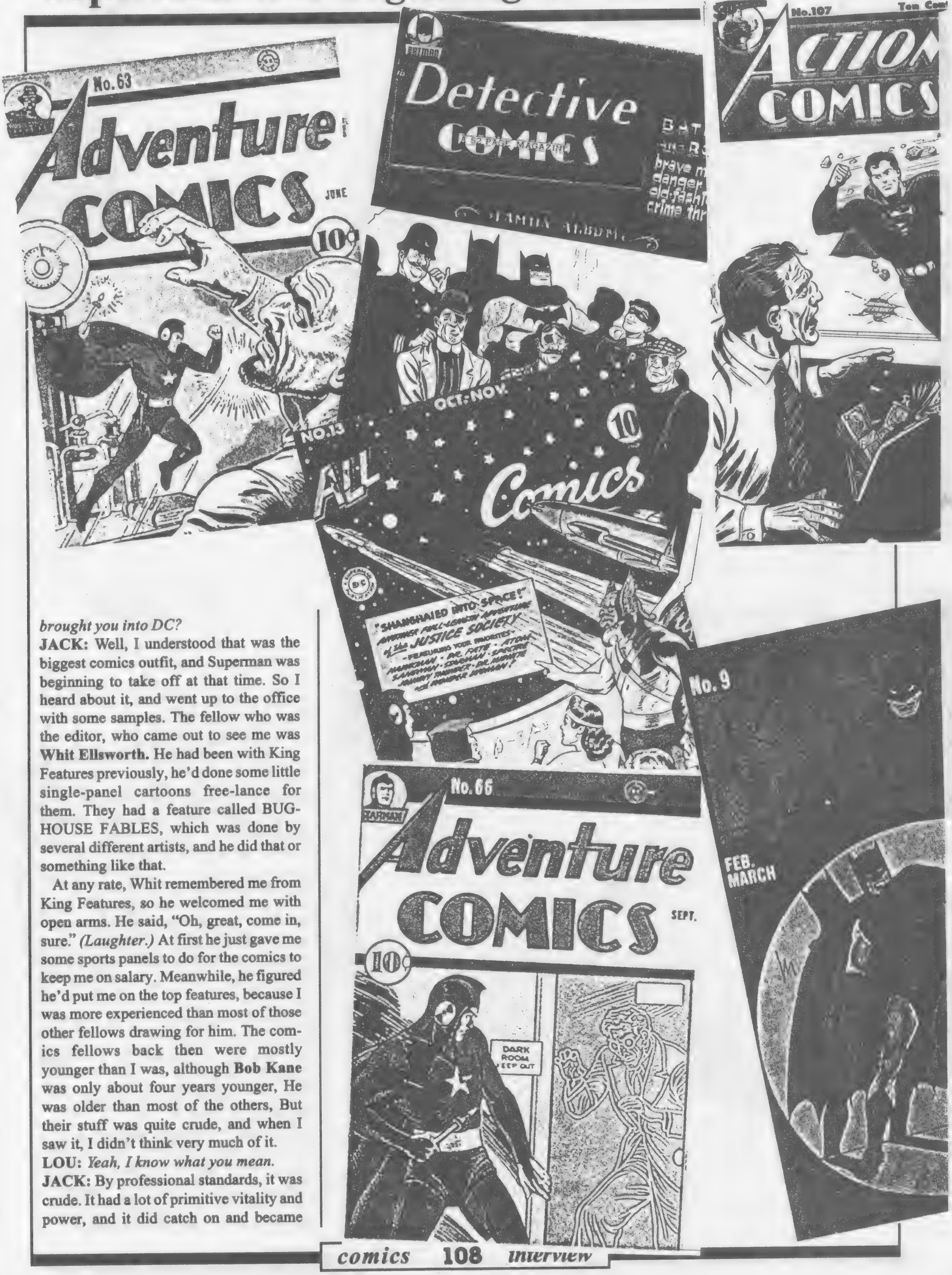


Here are two of the illustrations Jack did for Damon Runyon's stories. Note that none of the faces in the crowds are — well — faces in a crowd. Each is carefully rendered as an individual.

JACK: Right up until 1938. At that time, King Features took over a Midwestern syndicate called Central Press. They had a cartoonist already in place at Central. So King decided to keep that cartoon and discontinue mine.

Shortly after that, I went into comics. I had also done illustrations for **Damon Runyon's** short stories, which were syndicated, I think that was some of my best work. It was done in a semi-humourous style.
LOU: *Was this syndicated in magazines or newspapers?*
JACK: It was syndicated in newspapers, through King Features.
LOU: *And you also did some advertising work, as I recall.*
JACK: Yes, some sports cartoons in ads.
LOU: *So when 1938 came around and you were out of a job you'd held ten years with King Features, you went into comic books, which had only come into the public eye a few years beforehand. What*

“Superman was beginning to take off at that


No. 63
Adventure Comics
JUNE
10¢
Detective Comics
A 52 PAGE MAGAZINE
BATMAN
brave m
danger
old-fash
crime thr
No. 107
Ten Cen
Action Comics
OCT.-NOV.
No. 13
All Comics
10
"SHANGHAIED INTO SPACE!"
of the JUSTICE SOCIETY
No. 66
Adventure Comics
SEPT.
10¢
DARK ROOM KEEP OUT
No. 9
FEB. MARCH

brought you into DC?

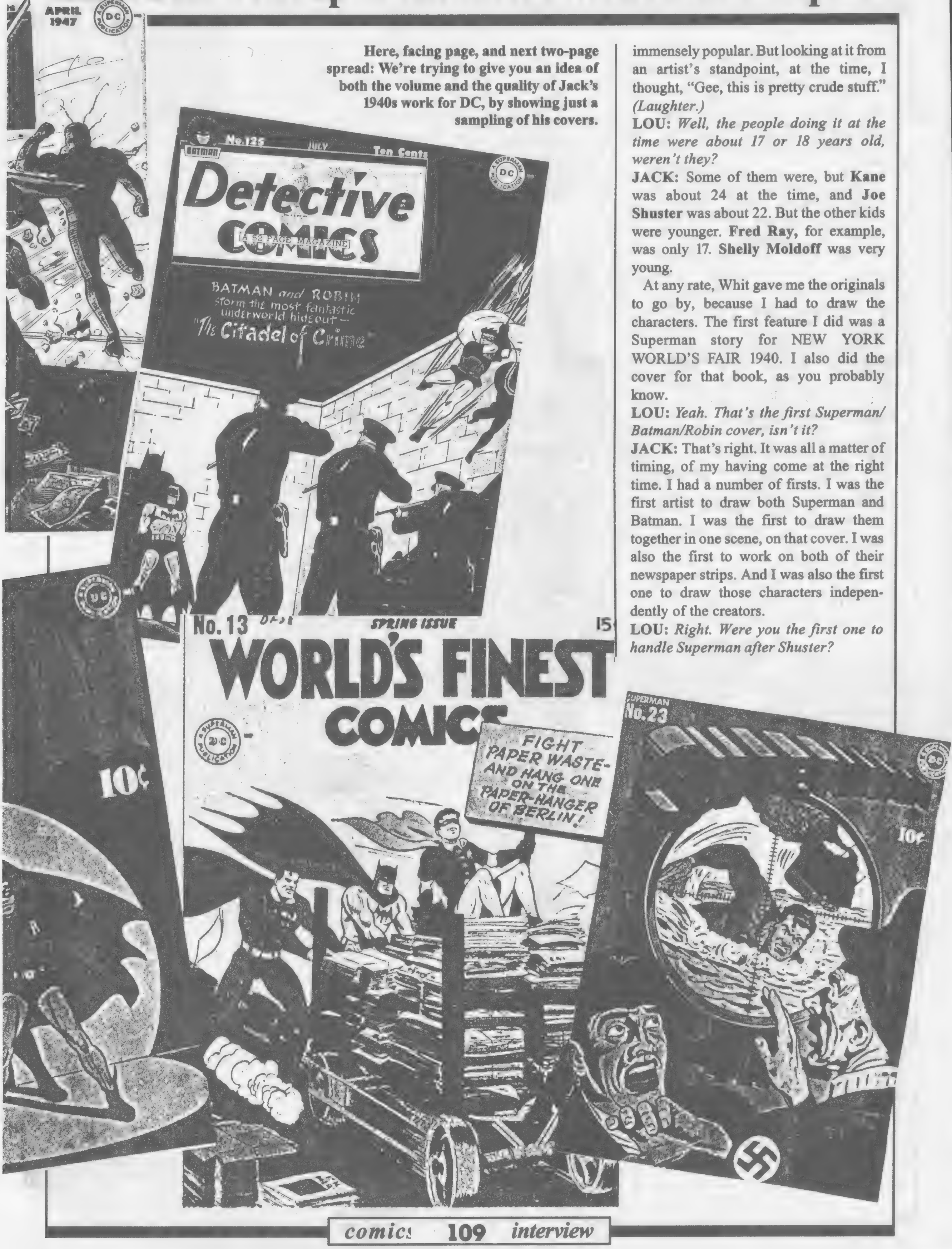
JACK: Well, I understood that was the biggest comics outfit, and Superman was beginning to take off at that time. So I heard about it, and went up to the office with some samples. The fellow who was the editor, who came out to see me was **Whit Ellsworth.** He had been with King Features previously, he’d done some little single-panel cartoons free-lance for them. They had a feature called BUGHOUSE FABLES, which was done by several different artists, and he did that or something like that.

At any rate, Whit remembered me from King Features, so he welcomed me with open arms. He said, “Oh, great, come in, sure.” *(Laughter.)* At first he just gave me some sports panels to do for the comics to keep me on salary. Meanwhile, he figured he’d put me on the top features, because I was more experienced than most of those other fellows drawing for him. The comics fellows back then were mostly younger than I was, although **Bob Kane** was only about four years younger, He was older than most of the others, But their stuff was quite crude, and when I saw it, I didn’t think very much of it.

LOU: *Yeah, I know what you mean.*

JACK: By professional standards, it was crude. It had a lot of primitive vitality and power, and it did catch on and became

time. So I went up to the office with some samples.”


APRIL 1947
A SUPERMAN PUBLICATION DC
No.125
JULY
Ten Cents
BATMAN
Detective COMICS
A 52 PAGE MAGAZINE
BATMAN and ROBIN storm the most fantastic underworld hideout — "The Citadel of Crime"
No. 13
SPRING ISSUE
15¢
WORLD'S FINEST COMICS
FIGHT PAPER WASTE- AND HANG ONE ON THE PAPER-HANGER OF BERLIN!
10¢
SUPERMAN No.23
10¢

Here, facing page, and next two-page spread: We’re trying to give you an idea of both the volume and the quality of Jack’s 1940s work for DC, by showing just a sampling of his covers.

immensely popular. But looking at it from an artist’s standpoint, at the time, I thought, “Gee, this is pretty crude stuff.” *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Well, the people doing it at the time were about 17 or 18 years old, weren’t they?*

JACK: Some of them were, but **Kane** was about 24 at the time, and **Joe Shuster** was about 22. But the other kids were younger. **Fred Ray,** for example, was only 17. **Shelly Moldoff** was very young.

At any rate, Whit gave me the originals to go by, because I had to draw the characters. The first feature I did was a Superman story for NEW YORK WORLD’S FAIR 1940. I also did the cover for that book, as you probably know.

LOU: *Yeah. That’s the first Superman/Batman/Robin cover, isn’t it?*

JACK: That’s right. It was all a matter of timing, of my having come at the right time. I had a number of firsts. I was the first artist to draw both Superman and Batman. I was the first to draw them together in one scene, on that cover. I was also the first to work on both of their newspaper strips. And I was also the first one to draw those characters independently of the creators.

LOU: *Right. Were you the first one to handle Superman after Shuster?*

“I tried to improve the figures, beca

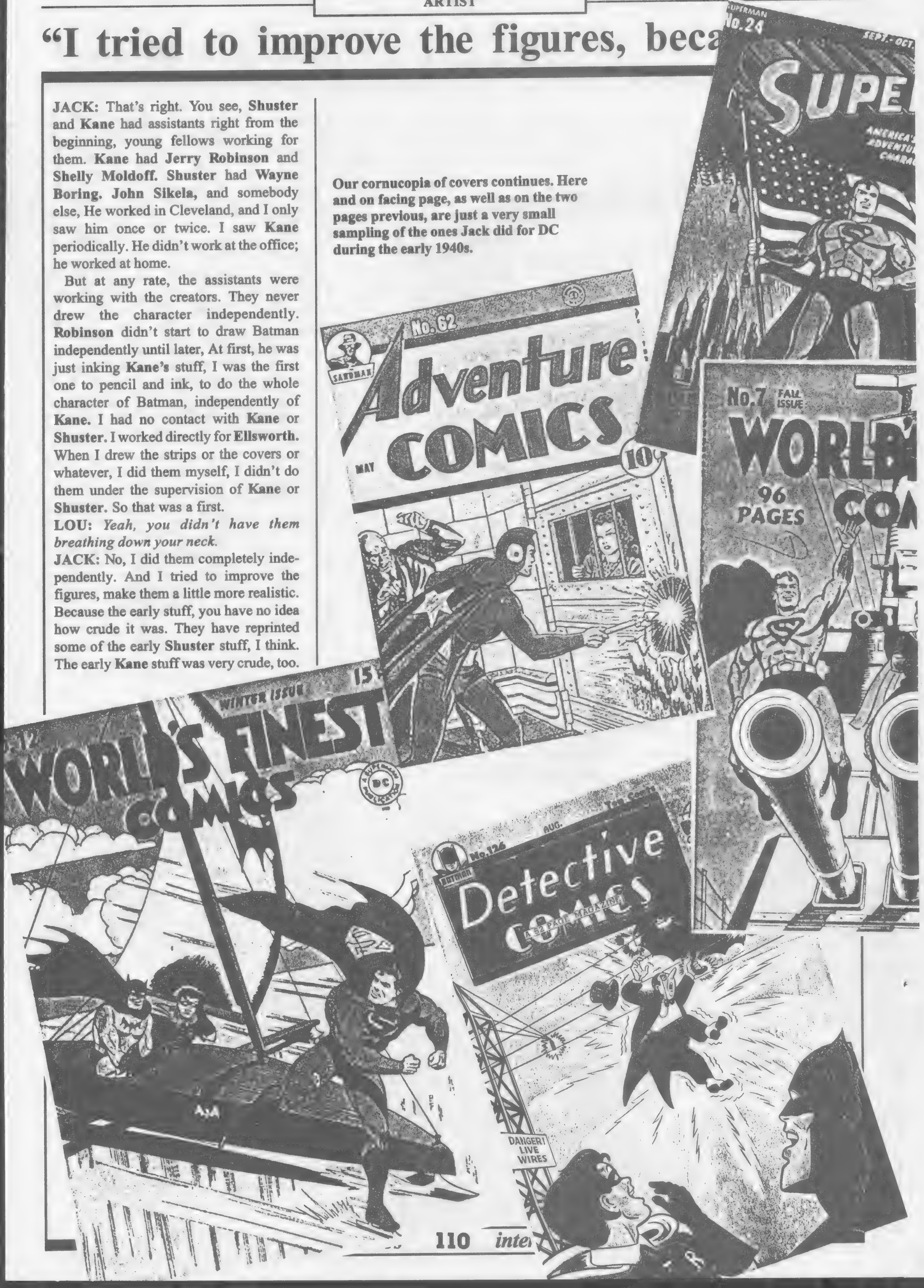
JACK: That's right. You see, **Shuster** and **Kane** had assistants right from the beginning, young fellows working for them. **Kane** had **Jerry Robinson** and **Shelly Moldoff. Shuster** had **Wayne Boring. John Sikela,** and somebody else, He worked in Cleveland, and I only saw him once or twice. I saw **Kane** periodically. He didn't work at the office; he worked at home.

But at any rate, the assistants were working with the creators. They never drew the character independently. **Robinson** didn't start to draw Batman independently until later, At first, he was just inking **Kane's** stuff, I was the first one to pencil and ink, to do the whole character of Batman, independently of **Kane.** I had no contact with **Kane** or **Shuster.** I worked directly for **Ellsworth.** When I drew the strips or the covers or whatever, I did them myself, I didn't do them under the supervision of **Kane** or **Shuster.** So that was a first.

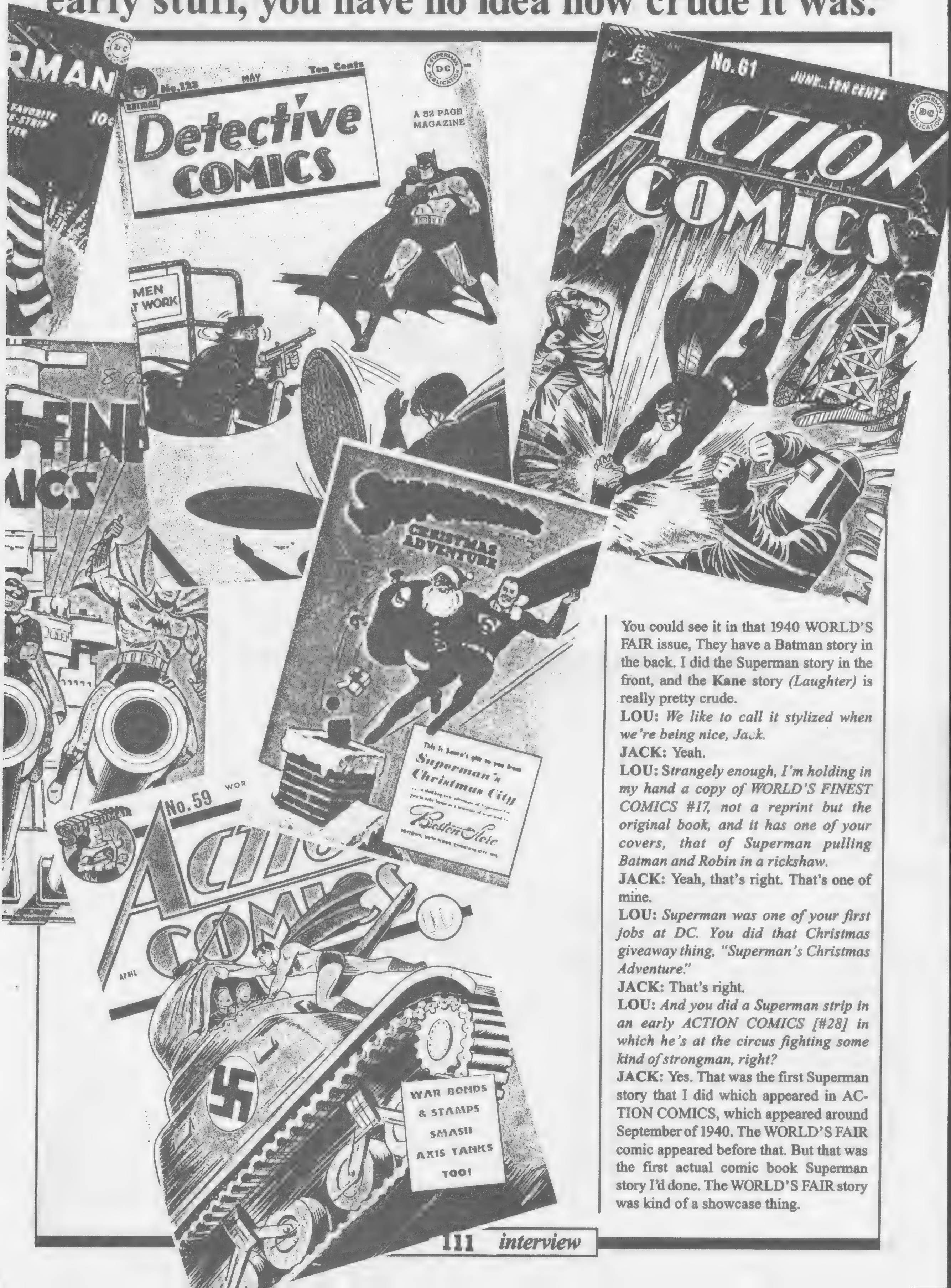
LOU: *Yeah, you didn't have them breathing down your neck.*

JACK: No, I did them completely independently. And I tried to improve the figures, make them a little more realistic. Because the early stuff, you have no idea how crude it was. They have reprinted some of the early **Shuster** stuff, I think. The early **Kane** stuff was very crude, too.

Our cornucopia of covers continues. Here and on facing page, as well as on the two pages previous, are just a very small sampling of the ones Jack did for DC during the early 1940s.


SUPERMAN
No. 24
SEPT.-OCT.
SUPE
AMERICA'S
ADVENTU
CHARA
No. 62
SANDMAN
Adventure
COMICS
MAY
10¢
No.7
FALL ISSUE
WORLD'
96 PAGES
CO
WINTER ISSUE
15¢
WORLD'S FINEST
COMICS
DC
AUG.
Ten Cents
No.126
BATMAN
Detective
COMICS
A 52 PAGE MAGAZINE
DANGER! LIVE WIRES

early stuff, you have no idea how crude it was."


RMAN
10¢
No.123
MAY
Ten Cents
Detective COMICS
A 52 PAGE MAGAZINE
MEN AT WORK
FINE
ICS
No. 61
JUNE...TEN CENTS
ACTION COMICS
CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE
This is Santa's gift to you from Superman's Christmas City
Boston Store
No. 59
ACTION COMICS
APRIL
WAR BONDS & STAMPS SMASH AXIS TANKS TOO!

You could see it in that 1940 WORLD'S FAIR issue, They have a Batman story in the back. I did the Superman story in the front, and the **Kane** story *(Laughter)* is really pretty crude.

LOU: *We like to call it stylized when we're being nice, Jack.*

JACK: Yeah.

LOU: *Strangely enough, I'm holding in my hand a copy of WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #17, not a reprint but the original book, and it has one of your covers, that of Superman pulling Batman and Robin in a rickshaw.*

JACK: Yeah, that's right. That's one of mine.

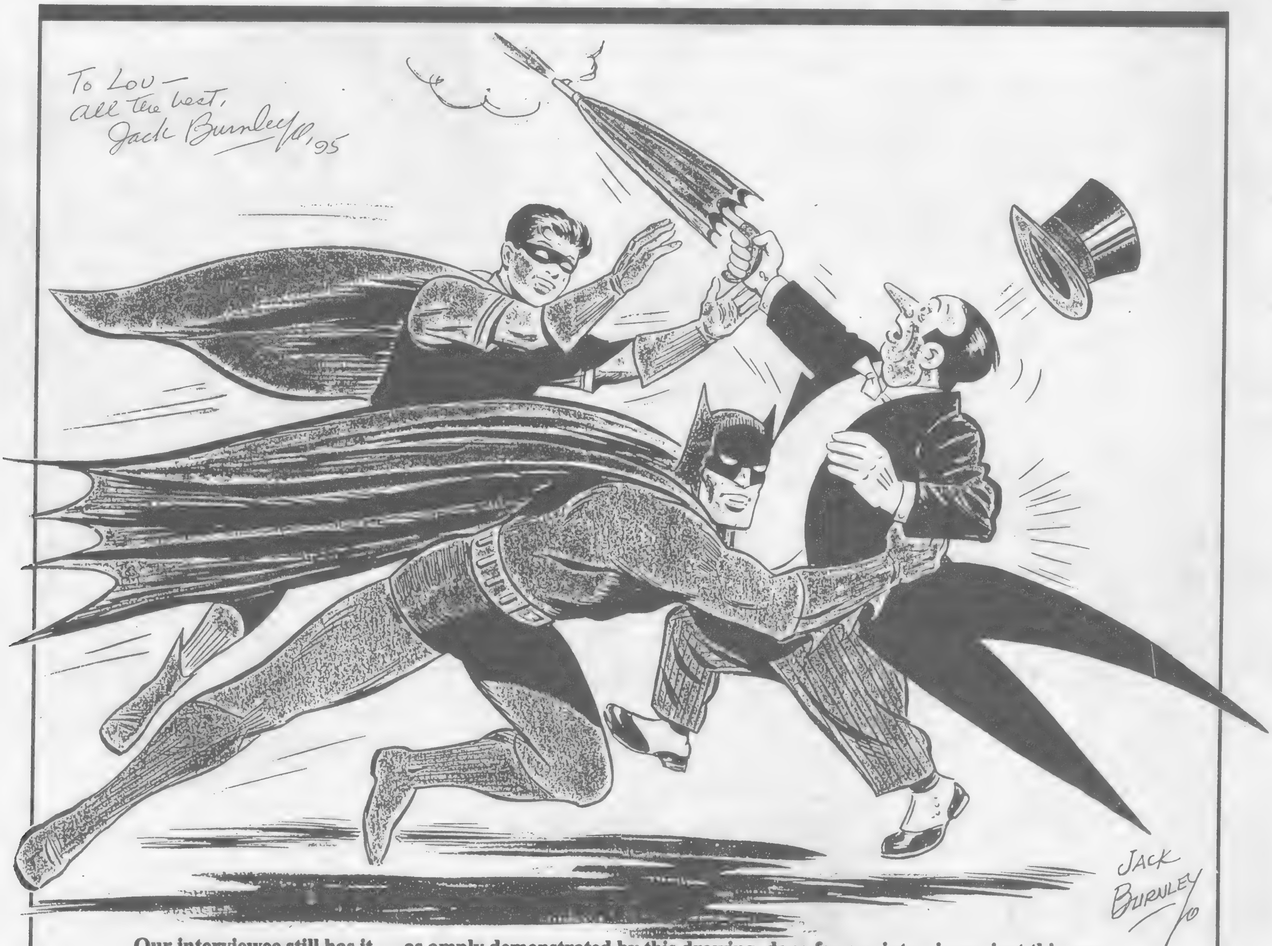
LOU: *Superman was one of your first jobs at DC. You did that Christmas giveaway thing, "Superman's Christmas Adventure."*

JACK: That's right.

LOU: *And you did a Superman strip in an early ACTION COMICS [#28] in which he's at the circus fighting some kind of strongman, right?*

JACK: Yes. That was the first Superman story that I did which appeared in ACTION COMICS, which appeared around September of 1940. The WORLD'S FAIR comic appeared before that. But that was the first actual comic book Superman story I'd done. The WORLD'S FAIR story was kind of a showcase thing.

"Starman was actually a spinoff from Superman."



Our interviewee still has it — as amply demonstrated by this drawing, done for our interviewer just this year.

LOU: *Yeah, it was a book they sold at the World's Fair. I remember seeing a lot of your art in the World War II era Superman and Batman books, and I can usually tell it by the distinctive inking. I know a lot of the covers that you've done. By any chance, did you do the Superman cover where he's got the American shield behind him and the eagle on his arm [SUPERMAN #14]?*

JACK: No, that was done by **Fred Ray.** I did a similar cover, one of two similar patriotic covers at that time. I did the one that has an American flag behind him. You can see a city with spires behind him, and he's standing in a heroic pose, holding the flag [SUPERMAN #24].

LOU: *Right, I remember that one. I was wondering if you also did the cover which has a couple of Nazis looking through a submarine periscope at Superman, who's just sunk an enemy ship and is swimming towards them [SUPERMAN #23]?*

JACK: Yes, yes, that's mine.

LOU: *Yeah, and he's giving them that kind of "You're next, punk!" look.*

JACK: *(Laughter.)* That's right.

LOU: *Yeah, I thought you had quite a few funny covers in there. For example, you did the one that had Superman bursting up through the ground in China [SUPERMAN #45].*

JACK: Yeah, I did that one, too.

LOU: *You had a lot of fun with some of those.*

JACK: The ideas for the covers were actually given to me by **Ellsworth.** He would very crudely pencil roughs on butcher paper, which he'd give to me. I'd take the general idea from that.

LOU: *Refine it quite a bit, I'd imagine.*

JACK: *(Laughter.)* Yeah. They were just little dummy figures to show the idea, that's all.

LOU: *Now we're going to get to one of the fun parts of the interview, the part about Starman. So why don't you tell us everything you can remember about the creation of Starman, and how you handled the character in his early adventures in ADVENTURE COMICS?*

JACK: Well, the editors, **Ellsworth** and the others, liked my work very much. And they figured that they'd give me a feature of my own. They wanted to have another flying super-hero. It was actually a spinoff from Superman. In fact, there are a lot of similarities between Superman and Starman. Starman didn't wear a mask, which is kind of strange, but neither did Superman. And there was the same old story with the double personality.

But a group of the editors got together with me and kicked the idea around. I made sketches of characters with costumes, and they wound up picking the Starman idea. I contributed some of the background on the character, The other editors all pitched in with various parts of the scene. **Murray Boltinoff** was the principal contributor.

LOU: *He was the guy who wrote the first Starman story, wasn't he?*

JACK: Yeah. He died last year. I spoke to him a couple of years ago. He didn't remember much about the creation of Starman, other than that a bunch of the editors got together and talked it over. He wasn't sure that he wrote the first story or not. But I thought he did, because I

"Starman was *going* to be like Batman or Superman."

remember talking to him about it.

At any rate, they had high hopes for the character. They ran ads, in which they said that Starman was *going* to be as great a character as Batman or Superman. *(Laughter.)* Unfortunately, it didn't really take hold.

LOU: *Well, it had a lot of competition in those days, too. But I've looked at the art, and it's still excellent work. However, I was struck by how much Starman looks facially like Superman in those stories. That. is, after you put the Starman hood on him and his hair is covered.*

JACK: Yes.

LOU: *One of the things I wanted to ask you about is The Mist, Starman's arch-enemy. Do you remember working on The Mist?*

JACK: Yes, I remember that character. The Mist stories were written by a science fiction writer, **Alfred Bester. Gardner Fox** wrote some of the Starman stories, starting about the third story or so and going on for about six in all. **Bester** actually wrote the best Starman scripts. Most of the others were not too good, they were too routine. **Gardner Fox** had about four different characters, and he was writing continuity for so many of them that he couldn't come up with fresh material for each one. He did his best work for the characters on which he was given credit. They didn't give him credit for the Starman stories. So they were just sort of routine scripts, they weren't that good.

LOU: *It was just something he did when they assigned it to him?*

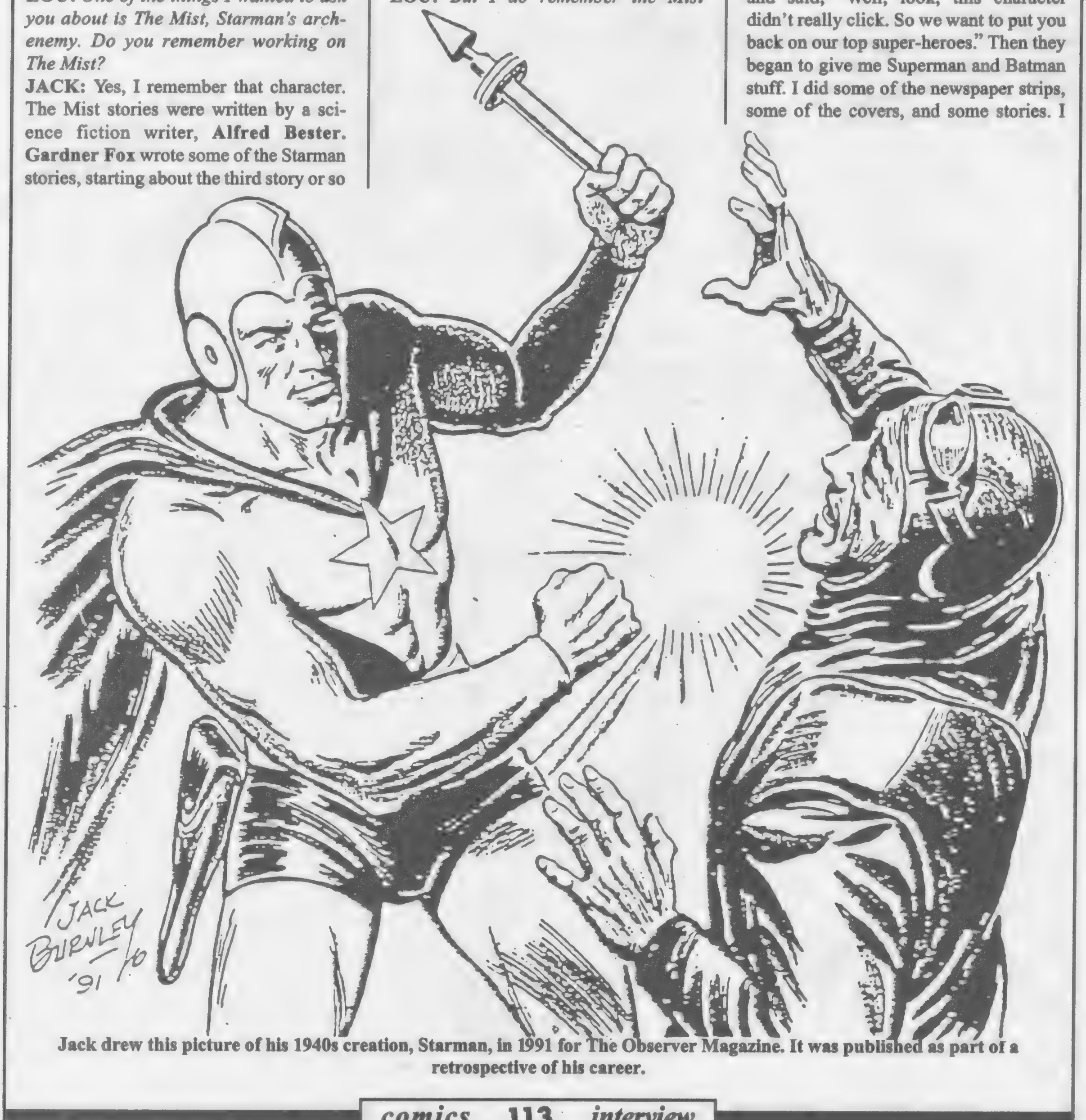
JACK: Yes.

LOU: *But I do remember the Mist because of the great artwork you did on him, which I've seen in reprints. The invisible guy with the floating head and all that stuff. It seems like you had a lot of fun with those stories.*

JACK: Yeah. Those were pretty good scripts. But a lot of the others were just sort of routine.

LOU: *You were doing a whole bunch of covers for DC at that time. But I want to talk about the newspaper strip work you did, with the SUPERMAN and BATMAN strips. Did that come right after Starman?*

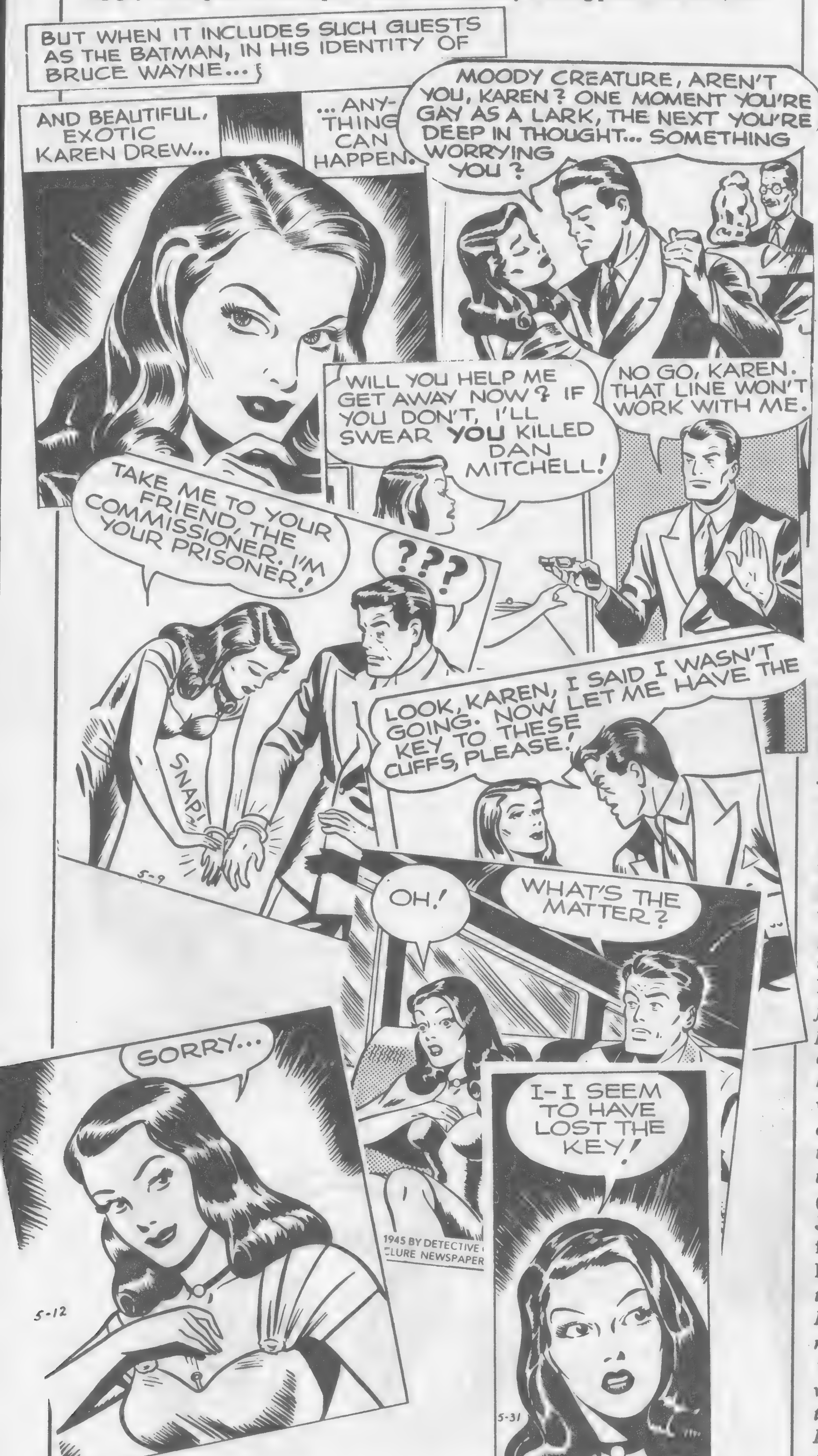
JACK: Yes. When Starman didn't really take off, they called me into the office, and said, "Well, look, this character didn't really click. So we want to put you back on our top super-heroes." Then they began to give me Superman and Batman stuff. I did some of the newspaper strips, some of the covers, and some stories. I



Jack drew this picture of his 1940s creation, Starman, in 1991 for The Observer Magazine. It was published as part of a retrospective of his career.

"Comic books were not held in too high a regard."

Here are scenes from a ten-week sequence in the BATMAN daily strip, in which the big guy never puts on the cape 'n' cowl. Note the key's hiding place. Hot stuff, huh!


BUT WHEN IT INCLUDES SUCH GUESTS AS THE BATMAN, IN HIS IDENTITY OF BRUCE WAYNE...
AND BEAUTIFUL, EXOTIC KAREN DREW...
...ANY-THING CAN HAPPEN.
MOODY CREATURE, AREN'T YOU, KAREN? ONE MOMENT YOU'RE GAY AS A LARK, THE NEXT YOU'RE DEEP IN THOUGHT... SOMETHING WORRYING YOU?
WILL YOU HELP ME GET AWAY NOW? IF YOU DON'T, I'LL SWEAR YOU KILLED DAN MITCHELL!
NO GO, KAREN. THAT LINE WON'T WORK WITH ME.
TAKE ME TO YOUR FRIEND, THE COMMISSIONER. I'M YOUR PRISONER!
???
SNAP!
LOOK, KAREN, I SAID I WASN'T GOING. NOW LET ME HAVE THE KEY TO THESE CUFFS, PLEASE!
5-9
OH!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
SORRY...
5-12
1945 BY DETECTIVE
CLURE NEWSPAPER
I-I SEEM TO HAVE LOST THE KEY!
5-31

also did a promotional drawing for the first BATMAN movie serial.

LOU: *Right. I've seen that, in the big Kitchen Sink book. But I really loved your BATMAN Sunday strips.*

JACK: Yes, I think I enjoyed doing that more than any of the others, because I figured a newspaper strip had more prestige at that time. *(Laughter.)* Comic books were not held in too high a regard in that period. So I enjoyed doing the BATMAN Sunday page. I did a few of the dailies, too, but mostly just the Sunday page. And I did some of the SUPERMAN Sunday pages, too. At one point, I remember, I was living in New York at the time, and the NEW YORK SUNDAY MIRROR was running my SUPERMAN Sunday page and BATMAN Sunday page at the same time. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *That's great. I ran through all of the BATMAN strips that you did, both Sundays and dailies, in one fell swoop last night. I think it was the first time I'd really read your daily Batman strips. Two things struck me about the daily sequence with Karen Drew. One is that you've got a ten-week sequence there in which Bruce Wayne never becomes Batman.*

JACK: *(Laughter.)* That's right.

LOU: *And the other thing that got me was twofold, about Karen Drew, the girl in that sequence. One was the good job you did drawing Karen, who was based on Lauren Bacall, am I right about that?*

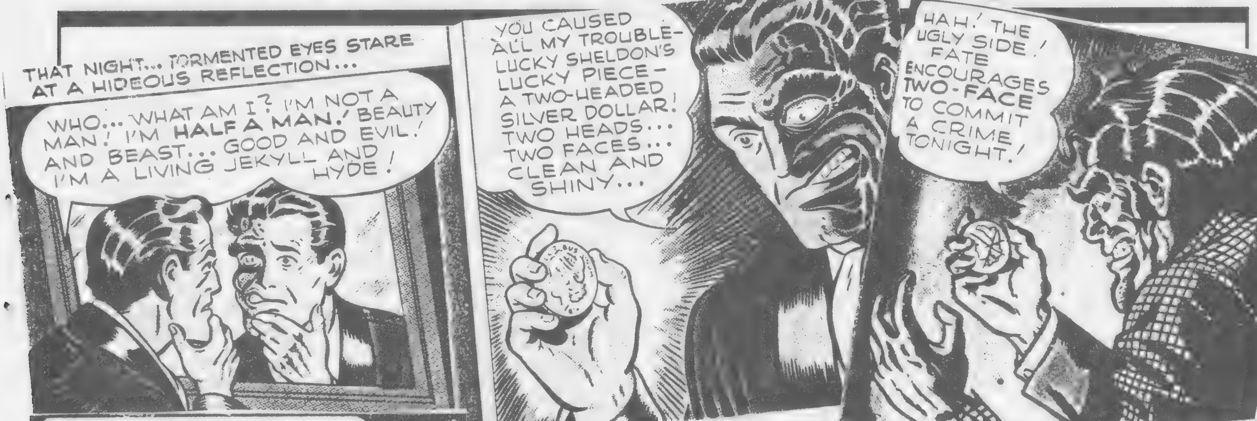
JACK: That's what they've said, but of course a cartoon character can't be made to have too much resemblance, just a general idea. I remember that **Jack Schiff** wrote the scripts, and he gave me a general idea of what he wanted the characters to look like.

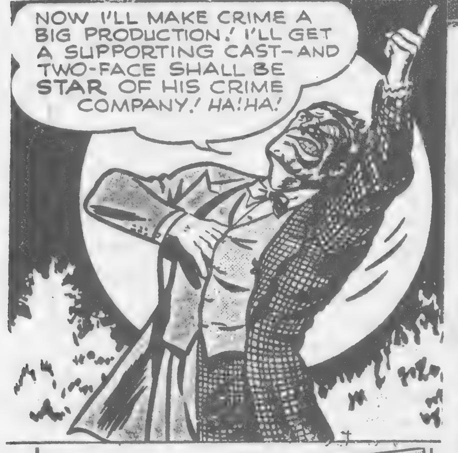
LOU: *Well, I was really struck by the face shot of Karen when she first appeared. And one sequence that really cracked me up was just after she'd handcuffed herself to Bruce Wayne. It was something you'd expect to see in a comedian's schtick, but I never expected to see it in a BATMAN strip. She drops the key down the front of her dress. (Laughter.)*

JACK: Yeah, that was a little bit risque for that time.

LOU: *I cracked up on that one, let me tell ya. But I was really impressed by the BATMAN Sunday work, even when I first read it in the DC 80 Page Giants in the '60s. You had realistic backgrounds to work with, and some interesting characters in the Bob Kane/Dick Sprang mold. It really seemed like you were going to town on that.*

"Kane had done the character. I tried to improve on it."


THAT NIGHT... TORMENTED EYES STARE AT A HIDEOUS REFLECTION...
WHO... WHAT AM I? I'M NOT A MAN! I'M HALF A MAN! BEAUTY AND BEAST... GOOD AND EVIL! I'M A LIVING JEKYLL AND HYDE!
YOU CAUSED ALL MY TROUBLE- LUCKY SHELDON'S LUCKY PIECE- A TWO-HEADED SILVER DOLLAR! TWO HEADS... TWO FACES... CLEAN AND SHINY...
HAH! THE UGLY SIDE! FATE ENCOURAGES TWO-FACE TO COMMIT A CRIME TONIGHT!

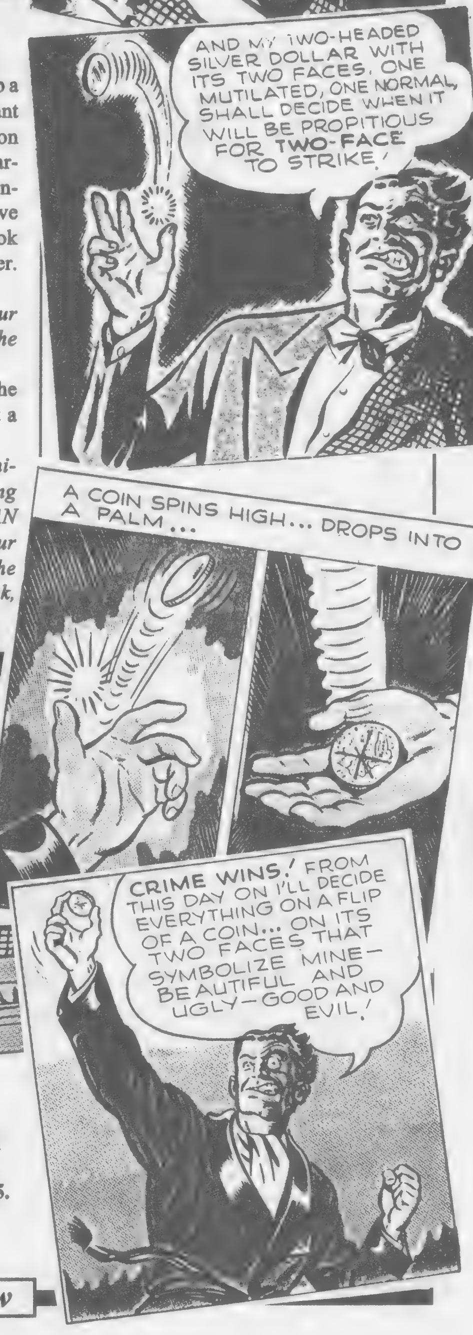

NOW I'LL MAKE CRIME A BIG PRODUCTION! I'LL GET A SUPPORTING CAST-AND TWO-FACE SHALL BE STAR OF HIS CRIME COMPANY! HA!HA!

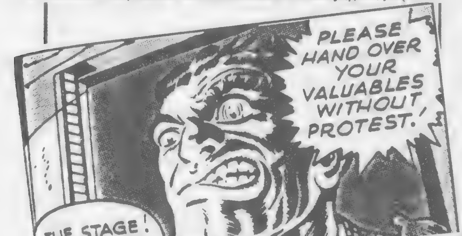
JACK: Yes. Well, I tried to sort of keep a middle ground on that stuff. I didn't want it to be too realistic. I kept a little cartoon element in some of the characters, particularly in that sequence with the Penguin and his aunt. But I tried to improve the BATMAN art, and make it look respectable for the Sunday newspaper. *(Laughter.)*

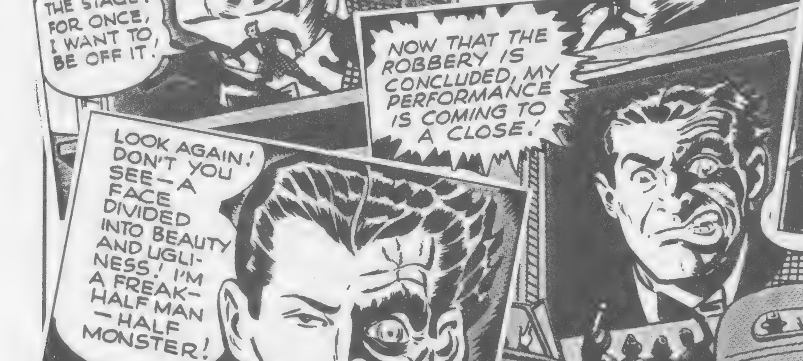
LOU: *I had to admit that I thought your depiction of Two-Face was one of the best I've ever seen.*

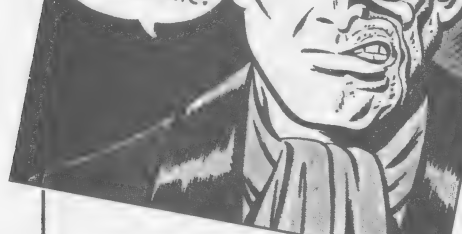
JACK: Well, **Kane** had already done the character. But I tried to improve on it a little bit.

LOU: *Yeah, he looked a bit more formidable in the face when you were doing him. So I'd have to say those BATMAN Sunday strips are my favorite of your work. Anyway, about a year after the War, according to Jerry Bails's book,*


AND MY TWO-HEADED SILVER DOLLAR WITH ITS TWO FACES, ONE MUTILATED, ONE NORMAL, SHALL DECIDE WHEN IT WILL BE PROPITIOUS FOR TWO-FACE TO STRIKE!
A COIN SPINS HIGH... DROPS INTO A PALM...
CRIME WINS! FROM THIS DAY ON I'LL DECIDE EVERYTHING ON A FLIP OF A COIN... ON ITS TWO FACES THAT SYMBOLIZE MINE- BEAUTIFUL AND UGLY-GOOD AND EVIL!

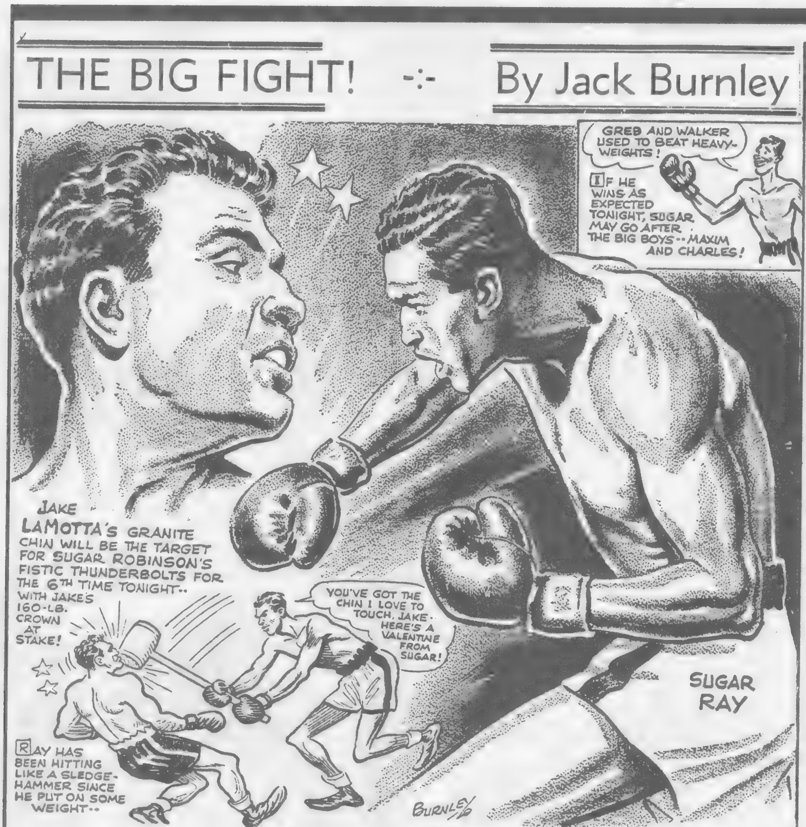

PLEASE HAND OVER YOUR VALUABLES WITHOUT PROTEST!
THE STAGE! FOR ONCE, I WANT TO BE OFF IT!


NOW THAT THE ROBBERY IS CONCLUDED, MY PERFORMANCE IS COMING TO A CLOSE!


LOOK AGAIN! DON'T YOU SEE- A FACE DIVIDED INTO BEAUTY AND UGLINESS! I'M A FREAK- HALF MAN -HALF MONSTER!

A medley of Two-Face images, all taken from Jack's work on the BATMAN newspaper strip in 1945.

"Since I retired, I've had requests to do recreations,


THE BIG FIGHT! -:- By Jack Burnley
GREB AND WALKER USED TO BEAT HEAVY-WEIGHTS!
IF HE WINS AS EXPECTED TONIGHT, SUGAR MAY GO AFTER THE BIG BOYS -- MAXIM AND CHARLES!
JAKE LAMOTTA'S GRANITE CHIN WILL BE THE TARGET FOR SUGAR ROBINSON'S FISTIC THUNDERBOLTS FOR THE 6TH TIME TONIGHT.. WITH JAKE'S 160-LB. CROWN AT STAKE!
YOU'VE GOT THE CHIN I LOVE TO TOUCH, JAKE.. HERE'S A VALENTINE FROM SUGAR!
SUGAR RAY
RAY HAS BEEN HITTING LIKE A SLEDGE-HAMMER SINCE HE PUT ON SOME WEIGHT..
BURNLEY

book,you started getting back into the newspaper art business, right?

JACK: Well, the actual year was 1947. I got a call from the editor at King Features, **Ward Green.** He asked me if I wanted to go back into sports cartooning. I said yes, because by this time they had discontinued the BATMAN newspaper strip and they were putting me back on comic book stories and covers, and they wanted a lot of production. And I was slow, because I tried to do a careful job, I didn't just bat the stuff out in sloppy fashion, like a lot of the others did.

LOU: *And if you'd stayed there, you probably would have ended up batting it out in sloppy fashion.*

JACK: That's right. They wanted fast production work. They didn't care about the quality that much for a comic book. So it got to be a grind, and I was getting tired of it. When I had an opportunity to go back into sports cartooning, in this case for the Hearst paper in Pittsburgh, the PITTSBURGH SUN-TELEGRAPH, with my stuff featured six times a week on the sports page, I took it. I told them, yeah, I'd think it over. And Ward told me the setup and gave me the one-year contract to sign, and said, "Just try to make yourself useful there at the paper!" I was just to do the sports cartoons there, and nothing else.

But a sports cartoon job with a newspaper is precarious, because it's a luxury. At that time papers did use a lot of sports cartoons, but they don't have them now. They've really gone out of fashion, you don't see them any more.

LOU: *Not in too many places. You see them for football, and that's about it.*

JACK: Yeah. But at that time, they were big. Every paper either used a syndicated cartoon, or they had their own cartoonist. So at any rate, I took the job, and left DC. After I was out there a year, I came back to New York to visit my family. I stopped by at DC, and **Ellsworth** wanted me to come back. He said, "I can get you an apartment." And it was very hard to get an apartment in New York at that time, since it was after the war. *(Laughter.)* He offered me a raise in pay, too. I thought it over, but I looked at some of the stuff they were using at the time, and I knew I'd have to grind it out much too fast. So I turned him down, and I told him no, I wouldn't come back.

Anyway, I stayed in Pittsburgh for four years. Then I got an offer to go to San Francisco, for Scripps-Howard. And I went there, as a sports cartoonist for the SAN FRANCISCO NEWS. I stayed in San Francisco until I retired, in 1976.

LOU: *When the interest in old-time comics came back, were you contacted much by the fan element to do appearances at conventions?*

JACK: Oh, yes, I've had lots of offers to go to conventions, but I don't really like that sort of thing. Some of the older cartoonists enjoy it. I know **Shelly Moldoff** does. He goes to all of them, and has a good time. He autographs things and makes a lot of money on the side. *(Laughter.)*

But I don't need the money, and I don't like that type of thing. I don't like crowds or public speaking, anything of that kind. So I just pass it up. But I get fan mail, and people who call me up from time to time. And occasionally, people ask to visit me or interview me, and I don't mind that.

LOU: *So, was your experience with comic books positive, negative, or something that you just got through?*

JACK: Well, actually, at the time I really didn't appreciate comics that much. I thought it was pretty much just for kids, and I just looked upon it as an interim job, until I could get back into newspaper cartooning. But towards the end, when I was doing the BATMAN strip, I enjoyed it, because it was a syndicated newspaper strip, and the stories were pretty good. If they had continued the newspaper strip, I might have stayed on for a while longer. But I didn't want to go back to the grind of comic books, which is why I went on to newspaper cartooning.

Looking back on it now, I do appreciate comic books more. They've gotten more recognition, and they've reprinted some of my stuff with credit,which is nice. The editors that I worked with, you might be interested in that.

LOU: *Go ahead.*

JACK: Besides **Ellsworth,** there was **Murray Boltinoff,** who was very nice, and **Jack Schiff,** who was a very capable writer and very pleasant to work with. **Sheldon Mayer,** I worked for him a short time on ALL-STAR COMICS. He was all right. **Mort Weisinger** was a guy that nobody liked.

LOU: (Laughter.) *So I've heard.*

JACK: I avoided him as much as possible. He was not a very pleasant fellow to work with.

LOU: *When you did Superman, did you work just with Whit Ellsworth?*

JACK: Yes.

LOU: *So you didn't have to go through Mort?*

JACK: No. And on Batman, I worked a lot with **Schiff,** and with **Boltinoff** on some of them. There's a funny story about **Sheldon Mayer** — I don't know if you want to print it or not. *(Laughter.)* He died recently. But anyway, once a year

but I don't feel much like drawing anymore.”

DC would have a Christmas party. And they'd rent a whole floor of that building on Lexington Avenue where their offices were, so they had a very large area in which they had all kinds of food and a lot of booze, of course. Now, **Mayer** was ordinarily not much of a drinker, as I understand. I'd never seen him drunk or anything before. But once a year, at Christmas, he would go wild. *(Laughter.)* He really would act like a madman. It was really funny. He'd go up and shout and yell and carry on.

And **Siegel** and **Shuster** would come up to New York for the Christmas party. Now, **Shuster** was a little fellow, very frail, with these big thick glasses — he had poor vision. **Mayer** was not very big himself, but he was roaring drunk at the time. And he spotted **Shuster,** and went over and gave him a big shove. *(Laughter.)* Joe fell down, and **Mayer** went around yelling at the top of his voice, “I flattened Superman!!”

LOU: *Okay. Guess somebody had to be the one to do it.* (Laughter.) *About 35 years before Doomsday did it. Any last thoughts about your artistic career, like what your favorite achievement was?*

JACK: Well, I think I was best at sports cartooning. Actually, I was a sports cartoonist trying to do comics. Eventually, I think I managed to do them pretty well. As I said, I enjoyed doing the BATMAN strip perhaps the most. Since I retired, I've had lots of requests to do recreations and stuff like that, but I don't feel much like drawing anymore. I've done a few for friends, and I've done only two for sale, at the request of **Joe Desris.** They were put up for sale at Christie's in New York. I did a recreation of the WORLD'S FAIR cover, and a drawing of Batman and Robin tackling the Penguin. They brought a pretty good price, over $4000 for the WORLD'S FAIR thing. But I don't need the money, and I did it mainly as a favor for **Desris.** It was about a year and a half ago, and I haven't done anything much since that time.

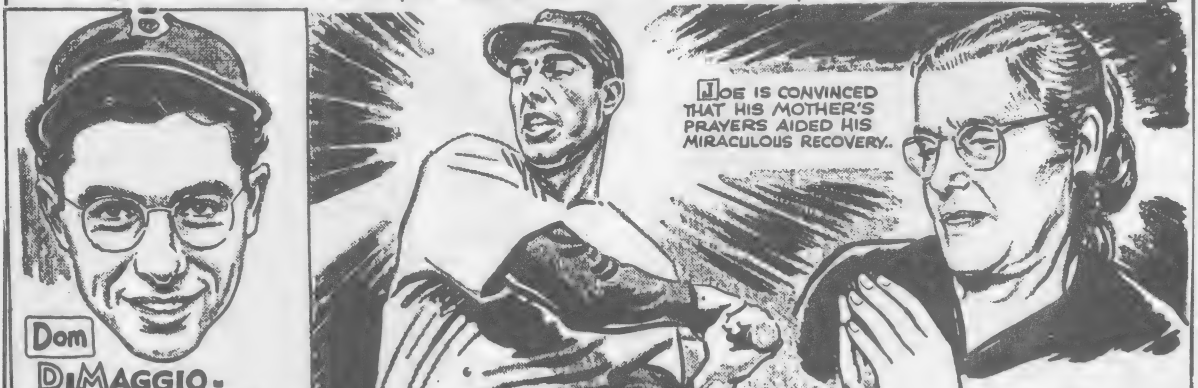
One of the things that I've done recently which I liked was the recreation of the promotional drawing for the BATMAN serial, in which Batman is punching out a crook in the foreground.

LOU: *How's about something on your family configuration?*

JACK: Well, we have no children. In 1936, I married **Dolores Farris,** who was a very well-known dancer and musical comedy actress at the time, She was a lot better known than I was. *(Laughter.)* She has a lot of things in her scrapbook from her musical and nightclub successes. In fact, I'm writing a biographical sketch of her career at that time, which is full of interesting anecdotes from the Roaring '20s and '30s, when the gangsters and racketeers owned all the clubs and were in show business. She knew all of them, and it's really a colorful story.

LOU: *Maybe I should've interviewed her!*

JACK: *(Laughter.)* It'd make a lot more interesting interview than mine!


Dom DiMAGGIO -
MOTHER DIMAGGIO SHOWS NO NO FAVORITISM -- SHE ALWAYS MENTIONS DOMINIC ALONG WITH THE MORE FAMOUS JOE --
JOE IS CONVINCED THAT HIS MOTHER'S PRAYERS AIDED HIS MIRACULOUS RECOVERY..
BURNLEY
THE AMAZING COMEBACK OF JOLTIN' JOE IS THE BASEBALL STORY OF THE YEAR -- BONE SPURS IN HIS HEEL SEEMED TO SPELL THE END OF HIS CAREER -- DOCTORS HAD LITTLE HOPE THAT HE COULD PLAY THIS SEASON -- IF EVER AGAIN ---
Joe DIMAGGIO
THE FAMOUS HEEL
-- HE WEARS A SPIKELESS SHOE TO LESSEN THE JAR --
I LED THE BUCS WITH 21 HOMERS IN 1941 !
VINCE WAS THE FIRST OF THE BROTHERS TO PLAY PRO BALL !

Jack has done so many sports cartoons, over so many years, that he sometimes thinks of himself as “a sports cartoonist trying to do comics.” Here and on the opposite page are two more of the superstars he dealt with in this way.

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“Milton Caniff was one of my idols.”

TEX HENSON

Here's one of the inside secrets of interviewing, folks: listen for the man who tells the best stories. If you encounter a man who is bubbling over with tales to tell, and a bunch of names you recognize attached to those tales, then you'd better get him in front of you with a tape recorder and get those stories down.

Tex Henson has been a regular at the Dallas Fantasy Fair for the last few years. He's a 70-year-old animator who has worked for Walt Disney, Famous, and Jay Ward, among others. He's done cartoons featuring Paul Bunyan, Peter and the Wolf, Bullwinkle, Tennessee Tuxedo, Underdog, the Trix rabbit, Casper the Friendly Ghost, and a batch of others. In addition, he also scripted the "Swing Sisson" strip in FEATURE COMICS for a time in the '40s.

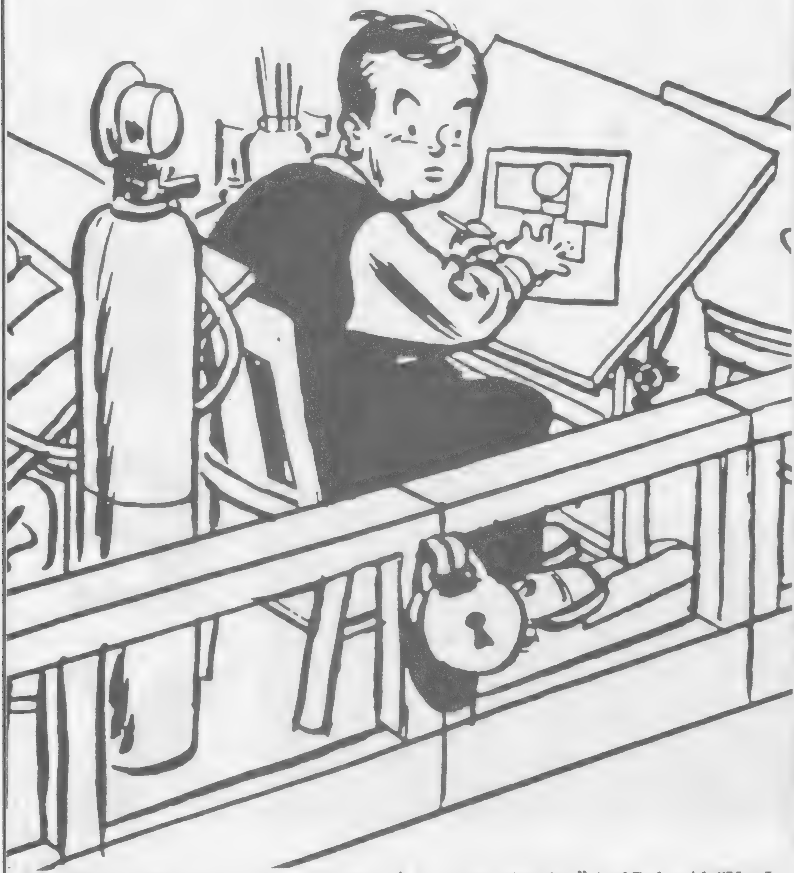
And if you've got a minute or two, he'll download on you all the animation history you could imagine. Complete with the Famous Names, the funny anecdotes, the nostalgic history, and the surprising coincidences in the business. I like to call Tex the Scheherezade of animation, and he proved it when I sat him down one day in Dallas to give me a Super Session in his history. He did over an hour and a half straight up, without even a glass of water. I have a feeling he could have gone another hour, easy.

Tex may be a senior now, but he's still as energetic and vital as ever. That probably shows in the following interview. He's still in the animation business in Texas, and churns out an astonishing amount of writing, with work in local newspapers, a column (Tex Mix) in Mark Stokes's SSCC newsletter for Southwestern comics pros, a script for Stokes's comic Zombie Boy, and other stuff. (The newsletter, by the way, can be had from Stokes for $15 a year at P.O. Box 821143, Dallas, Texas, 75382. Last ish, Tex told about the meeting of Walt Disney and Salvador Dali. Interested, aren't you?) He was telling me stories all the way to my hotel room, so, when I finally got the tape started, I made him back up and retell this story which he'd just given me. And here it is . . .

Milton Caniff self-portrait ©1948 Milton Caniff / LI'L ABNER TM & ©1951 Capp Enterprises, Inc. / PEANUTS TM & ©1960, 1965 United Feature Syndicate, Inc. / TERRY & THE PIRATES TM & © Chicago Tribune-N.Y. News Syndicate, Inc. / Tarzan TM & ©1976 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. / Batman TM & ©1939 DC Comics, Inc. / Superman TM & ©1938 DC Comics, Inc. / MAD TM & ©1954 Educational Comics, Inc. / FANTASIA ©1940 Walt Disney Productions / Casper the Friendly Ghost TM & ©1995 Harvey Comics, Inc. / PECOS BILL ©1946 Walt Disney Productions / Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck TM & ©1995 Walt Disney Productions / Roger Rabbit in TUMMY TROUBLE ©1991 The Walt Disney Company, Inc., and Amblin Entertainment, Inc. / THREE LITTLE PIGS ©1933 Walt Disney Productions / Flip the Frog TM & ©1930 Celebrity Pictures / BULLWINKLE TM & ©1960 P.A.T.-Ward Productions, Inc. / CRUSADER RABBIT TM & ©1957 Creston Studios, Inc. / TENNESSEE TUXEDO and KING LEONARDO TM & ©1980 Leonardo-TTT / Commander McBragg ©1964 Jay Ward Productions / HE DONE HER WRONG ©1930 Milt Gross / SONG OF THE SOUTH ©1946 Walt Disney Productions.

“I said, ‘Milton Caniff died the other day,’ and

Self-portrait: Milton Caniff



LOU MOUGIN: *Okay, Tex, tell me the story about the night when Milt Caniff died and your class's reaction.*

TEX HENSON: Well, **Milton Caniff** was one of our idols. We called him the Rembrandt of the comic strip. And at the time he died, I was teaching a class in cartooning at Brookhaven College here in Dallas. So I figured that'd be a point of good conversation for the class that night. And after everybody settled down that night, I said, “Well, **Milton Caniff** died today.” Blank looks.

So a couple of weeks later I was Going to a Film Pioneer meeting at Los Colinas. I'm considered one of the film pioneers here on the Third Coast, I'm one of the ones who came back here and started a film industry here in this part of the country. And **Bob Johnson,** who had been a former partner of mine, and who also qualifies as a film pioneer, was gonna drive me out there. And I figured, “Well, this'll be a chance to get a nice conversation.” So I waited for the proper time, and I said, “Well, **Milton Caniff** died the other day.” And Bob said, “Yes, I heard that. Well, what did he do?” *(Laughter.)* Well, it just really crushed me.

LOU: *That's sad!*

TEX: So a couple of weeks later I was talking to him on the phone, and I said, “You really hurt my feelings. When I said **Milt Caniff** had died, you asked me what he did.” And he said, “I did not! *(Laughter.)* Of course I knew who **Milton Caniff** is!” I said, “Well, I'm sure glad to know I was mistaken.” *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Yeah, and you should have asked him, “Okay, What did he do? . . . Uh, ah, er . . .”*

TEX: But our heroes back in those days, the names seemed to matter more back then. Of course, I studied under **Burne Hogarth,** who was the TARZAN Sunday page illustrator. And of course, all the Big Names came by to visit with Burne, so I got a chance to meet a bunch of them.

LOU: *What are some of the names?*

TEX: Well, I met **Al Capp,** and **Ham Fisher** . . .

LOU: *Not at the same time, I hope!* (Laughter.)

TEX: No, but I'll tell you an interesting story about **Al Capp.** His comic strip was the hottest brand going, LI'L ABNER. And they were making quite a bit of enterprises out of it. They had a Broadway show going, and they were building circulation in the papers. And the thing is, not every paper pays the same for strips. It depends on the location and the circulation. But LI'L ABNER was such a popular item that **Capp** began to wonder. He seemed to feel that he should be getting a bigger return from the strip. He was wondering what was wrong, and he kind of smelled a rat. So he checked it out and he found that the syndicate had an interesting little scam going. They were selling LI'L ABNER as a package. You had to buy some other stuff to get LI'L ABNER. And what they did was, they had this recipe column that you had to buy for a hundred dollars a week, and they'd let you have LI'L ABNER with it for ten dollars. So, on the books, LI'L ABNER's only gonna bring in ten dollars from that paper.

Well, **Capp** took 'em to court, proved it, and got a $3,000,000 settlement out of the syndicate. *(Lou whistles.)* Then **Capp** said, “I want to own ABNER.” And he told the syndicate, “Either you let me own ABNER, or when my contract is up, you can have ABNER, 'cause I'm going to King Features. They want me anyway.” Well, of course, the syndicate made a deal. They signed LI'L ABNER over to **Capp,** but they retained 40 per cent, just to have some kind of say over what he was doing.

And then what **Capp** did was turn right around and do a set of Sunday pages, in which he made LI'L ABNER into a cartoonist for a while, and a syndicate in the strip did to LI'L ABNER just what they'd done to **Capp!** And the syndicate had to run this without comment. *(Laughter.)* The people didn't know what was going on, but we were all laughing our heads off. *(Laughter.)*

But **Ham Fisher** and **Al Capp** were enemies, because when **Capp** was working for **Fisher** on JOE PALOOKA — which meant that he was drawing JOE PALOOKA — they created Big Leviticus and his family.

LOU: *Right, the hillbilly guy.*

TEX: So, when **Capp** left and went with United Features Syndicate, he had his hillbillies in LI'L ABNER, and **Ham Fisher** said he'd stolen his hillbillies. Of course, **Fisher** said this time he'd take him to court. Now, really, **Capp's** style

Bob Johnson said, 'I heard. What did he do?'"

was close to **Fisher's.** So what the syndicate did was, they had a fella on the staff named **Mo Leff. Sam Leff** was **Mo Leff's** brother. He used to draw a thing called CURLY KAYOE, which became JOE JINKS. And **Mo Leff** had had a Sunday page called PETER PAT, which hadn't gone anywhere. See, these syndicates maintained an art department, because they had to chop up the strips in various ways to fit various papers, and also because they needed the wallpaper. You know what wallpaper is, if the guy doesn't get his strips in on time you chop up the old strips and paste them up and create new strips for him. Of course, they charge him for it. So, anyway, **Mo Leff** was on the staff of United Features Syndicate, and what they did was they got **Mo Leff** to redesign LI'L ABNER, that thick-thin style LI'L ABNER was drawn in. And, evidently, while **Mo Leff** was teaching **Al Capp** how to draw like **Al Capp, Al Capp** was teaching **Mo Leff** how to draw like **Ham Fisher.** Because **Mo Leff** became the artist on JOE PALOOKA, and was for many years. After **Ham Fisher** died, you began to see **"M. Leff"** above his name on the strip.

Of course, **Fisher** owned his strip, which is not as common a thing as you might think.

LOU: *At least not back then, it wasn't.*

TEX: Well, not many own their strip now. For instance, **Charles Schulz** does not own PEANUTS.

LOU: *Yeah, but they gave him a heck of a marketing deal on it.*

TEX: The thing is, I'm sure that if **Schulz** asked them, they would sign it over to him any time. But he says, "Why should I?" They're taking care of the bookkeeping for him, and they let the syndicate have that part of the money. So **Schulz's** deal with the syndicate is this: that if he ever has to retire, which he might have to because he's developed this shake in his hand — and it's given him a new style, which doesn't look too bad *(Laughter.)* — you only really notice it in the Sunday pages. In the dailies, when it's reduced. it pulls together pretty good. But if he retires or he dies, the strip will cease immediately. Nobody will ever touch that strip but **Charles Schulz.** He's never had assistants or anything.

LOU: *I don't know about that. I've heard rumors that Dale Hale, who drew the PEANUTS comic book for Dell — it was signed Schulz, but it was really Dale Hale drawing it — well, Mark Evanier, who knows Dale Hale, asked him once, "Have you ever done any work on the daily strip for Sparky?" And Hale says, "No, never." And. Mark says, "Are you sure?" And Hale says, "Weeellll . . . maybe." So we don't know. But this is not confirmed.*

TEX: Well, what I've heard is that nobody else has touched it. Of course, there isn't anything wrong with it. What's happened, you see, is that Schulz is a multimillionaire. And **Jim Davis,** with GARFIELD, is a multimillionaire. You could count the multimillionaires in this business on one hand. Most cartoonists are lucky to be making a living doing something they like to do. But **Schulz** and **Davis** have reached a place where they're coasting. The stuff doesn't have the same flair or anything.

Now, it's a kind of interesting thing: **Milt Caniff** was with the CHICAGO TRIBUNE syndicate. And his contract said that he could not draw for anybody but them, and anything he wrote or drew belonged to them. And he was doing a little something on the side called Mr. Coffee Nerves for Sanka, he and **Noel Sickles** were doing that, and they signed it "Paul Arthur," which was from their middle names. And when the syndicate found out he was doing it, they said, "You gotta give us the money, because we own everything you do." So he quit doing it.

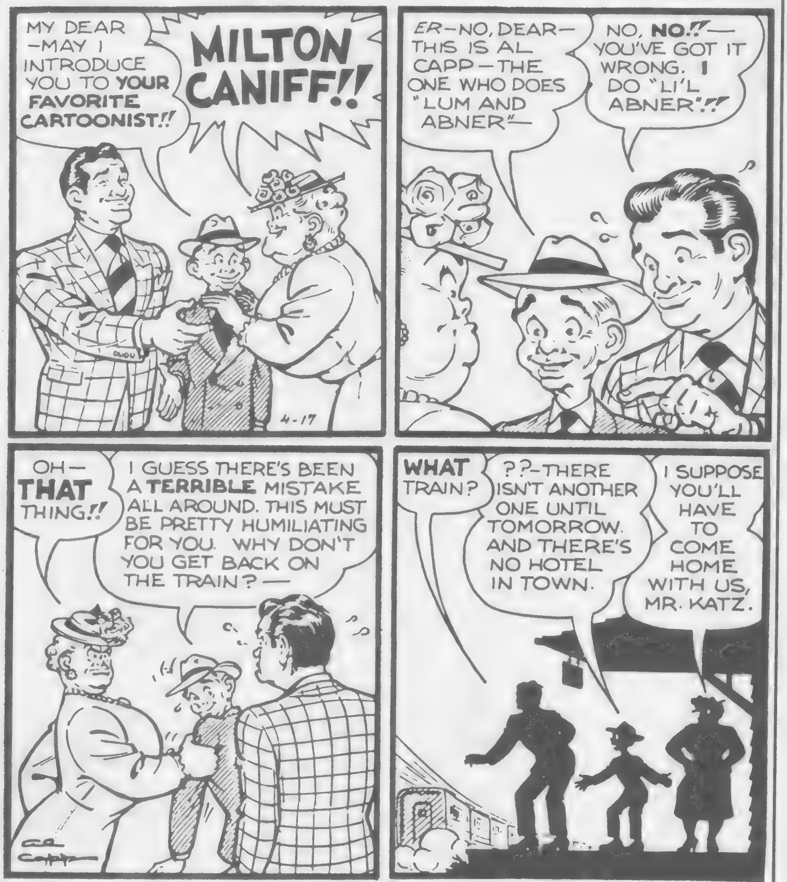
And **Milton Caniff** decided that he wanted to provide some kind of security for his family. So he made a deal with another syndicate that, when his contract was up, he would start a strip for them which he would own. Of course, if they could ever had proved that he wrote one line or made one sketch of the character on it before his contract was up, the CHICAGO TRIBUNE would own it. So when the salesmen went out, they could only say, "There's a new strip coming out by Milton Caniff." They couldn't tell anybody what it was about or anything, but it was pre-sold just on his name.

LOU: *Which strip was that?*

TEX: TERRY AND THE PIRATES.

LOU: *TERRY AND THE PIRATES? I thought it was STEVE CANYON.*

TEX: No, he owned STEVE CANYON. It was TERRY AND THE PIRATES, which **George Wunder** took over for him. Now, rounding it up, the daily pages and the Sunday pages don't come out even. So you had to really knock out a


MY DEAR —MAY I INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR FAVORITE CARTOONIST!!
MILTON CANIFF!!
4-17
ER—NO, DEAR— THIS IS AL CAPP—THE ONE WHO DOES "LUM AND ABNER"—
NO, NO!!— YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG. I DO "LI'L ABNER"!!
OH— THAT THING!!
I GUESS THERE'S BEEN A TERRIBLE MISTAKE ALL AROUND. THIS MUST BE PRETTY HUMILIATING FOR YOU. WHY DON'T YOU GET BACK ON THE TRAIN?—
WHAT TRAIN?
??—THERE ISN'T ANOTHER ONE UNTIL TOMORROW. AND THERE'S NO HOTEL IN TOWN.
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL HAVE TO COME HOME WITH US, MR. KATZ.
Al Capp

More self-portraiture. Is this how Al Capp saw himself?

“A trick of the trade was the six-finger gag—

whole bunch of dailies to make it end on New Years Day, so they could have it start fresh on New Years with a new artist.

Then the wonderful thing in the Sunday page: Terry is saying goodbye to Deeth Crispin. And in the last panel, he’s walking away with his back to us, and on a wall is a poster for a New Year’s Dance, which they’re going to hold in the Air Corps center there, and it says, “Come ring out the old, ring in the new.”

LOU: *Right. I’ve seen that page, it’s great.*

TEX: Yeah, and in the last page, Terry’s saying to Deeth Crispin, “Come see us. There’s going to be some changes, but I’ll still be around.” So I hit Milton with that, I said how great that was that it just happened to end up there, and he gave me this big grin and said, “You think that happened by accident?” *(Laughter.)* It was a little piece of showmanship he ended it with.

Then he started with STEVE CANYON. Now, I was creating a comic strip at that time.

LOU: *Which was?*

TEX: Well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll tell you about it in a while.

So I was going around to all the syndicates, talking to the editors. And of course, the talk was about this new strip by **Milton Caniff.** And one of the editors commented, “The trouble with STEVE CANYON is that everybody is flip!” See, in TERRY AND THE PIRATES, some people were flip, but they had a serious plot. In **Steve Canyon,** it was just too clever, and it caused the whole thing to fall apart. That was that editor’s criticism. Well, anyway, **Caniff** did settle down, eventually.

LOU: *He got out of the jitterbug phase.*

TEX: But what happened was, he had the thing set up so that his family would be taken care of. But he lived to be 83 or something like that. His wife was dead by that time, his kids were grown and gone, and there was no need for the real thing that strip was set up for! *(Laughter.)* The main reason was lost. And, of course, when he died, they just stopped the strip. He was just coasting there at the end, anyway. He was in his 80’s, and they no longer needed to own the strip or anything about it.

LOU: *But I still think his masterpiece and the thing he did that was the most good, was TERRY AND THE PIRATES. I read almost all of his run on that thing. And it was so good when I was reading it, I got mad because Cat Yronwode, who had lent me the thing, had gaps in the run and I didn’t get to see what was happening in the missing parts!*

TEX: Well, **Captain Joseph Patterson** was the one who gave him the idea for that thing. The Orient, the pirates, and so forth. And of course, when World War II broke out, it broke out in the Orient. *(Laughter.)* So he had to grow Terry up real fast, so Terry could go into the Air Corps. And of course, some of the finest stuff he did was in World War II.

LOU: *I remember those.*

TEX: But anyway, about this strip, after the War, **Phil Martin** and I decided that we would try a strip. So we decided to base it on my personality, which was kind of erratic. And we called it JAY WALKER. Jay Walker was a guy who didn’t live by the rules. You can see the pun there, on jaywalker. I remember one of the sequences: he’s coming in the office, and the boss is standing there and says, “Late again!” And Jay Walker says, “So am I!” But the character was me. So we were having the novelty of the character taking the strip around.

LOU: *He was a cartoonist?*

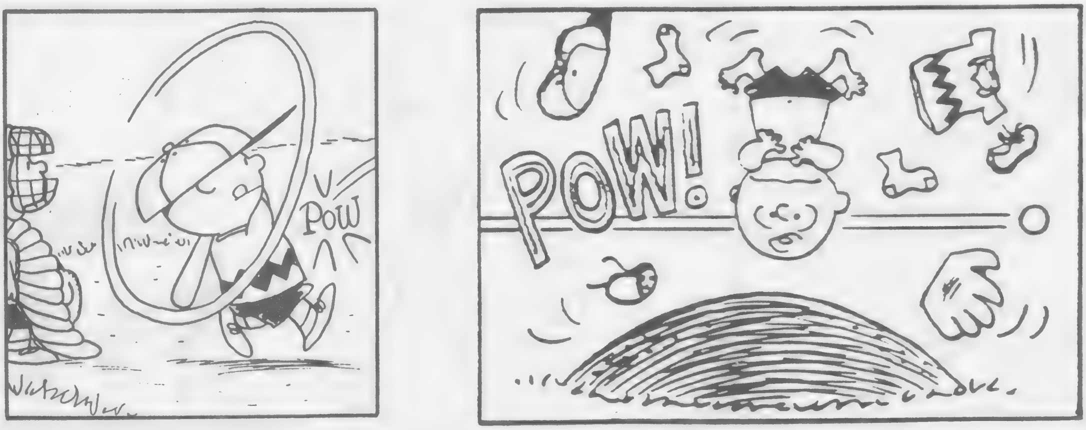
TEX: No, he wasn’t a cartoonist. But the drawing was me!* What you do is that you go around the first time and you get all the criticism, all the input. Then you go back and retool. So after I’d made the rounds to the syndicate, I went back to Dallas...I was living in New York, so that’s how I had the opportunity to take it to the syndicates. So we revamped it and took it around again. Well, interestingly enough, we sold that strip by mail to **Monte Beaujaily. Monte Beaujaily** was the one who had discovered **Al Capp** for United Features Syndicate. And **Monte Beaujaily** was in the process of putting together a page of strips. It was going to be a thing in which the syndicate paper could buy the whole thing, and then use what you wanted to.

**Probably in the sense that Lancelot Pertwillaby, aka Captain Kentucky, is the look-alike and alter ego of his creator, cartoonist Don Rosa.*

LOU: *You buy the whole package, take what you need, and then leave the rest.*

TEX: Right. And it was a very well-known syndicate. But anyway, that was what he was going to do. And he had a lot of name people there. **Bill Dwyer** was one of them. **Dwyer** eventually became a friend of mine. When I was a kid, he was the one who had drawn DUMB DORA. Then, because he was interested in line, **Bill Dwyer** became one of the world’s leading authorities on Japanese drawing. He had a whole course on that. So I had a copy of his book on that.

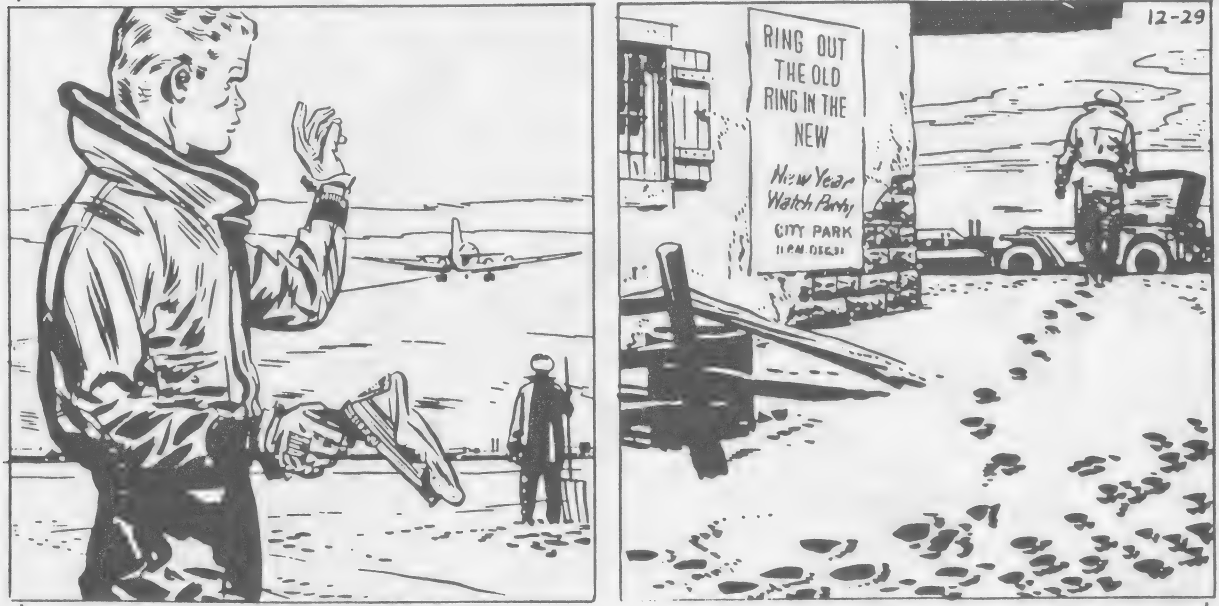
But anyway, we did the set of strips, and he put them all together so you had a lot of pages of it as a comic strip. And we had that, and the stuff was printed up. And then **Monte Beaujaily** dropped out



Peanuts by Dale Hale, left, and Charles Schulz, right.

give the syndicate editor something to find."

These are the last two TERRY AND THE PIRATES panels done by Milton Caniff.

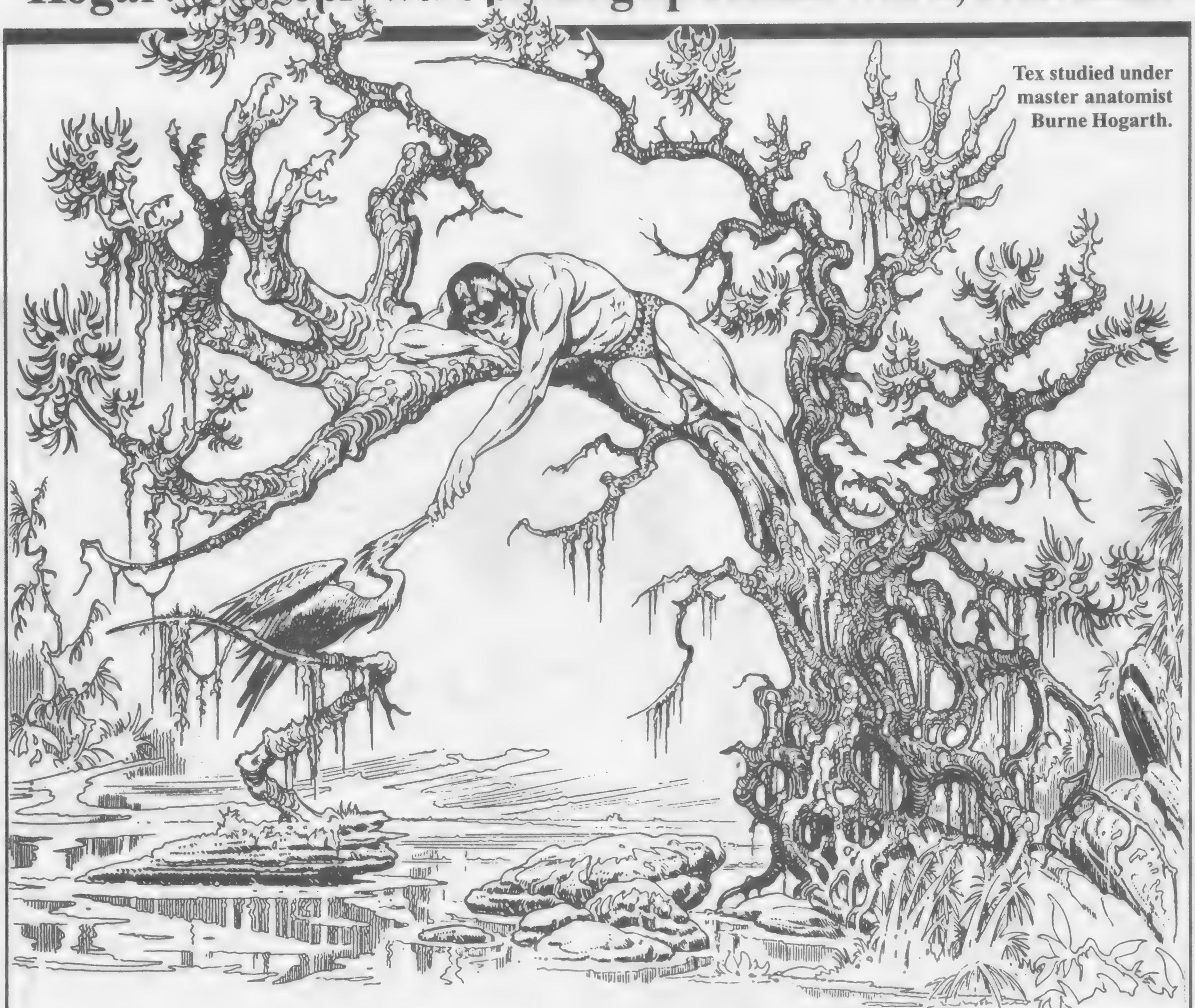


of sight and was never heard from again.
LOU: *Nobody ever figured out what happened to him?*
TEX: No. We never got our artwork back, didn't make a cent, don't know what happened to him. And that's when Phil said — now, Phil, when he was just a kid, had studied under a guy named **Jack McGuire** down in San Antonio. **Jack McGuire** was drawing a thing called BULLET BENTON, which later became THE RED KNIGHT.
LOU: *Oh, okay. That was a super-hero.*
TEX: Yeah, he went from being a cowboy to a super-hero. And Phil would study under him when he was in high school. And **Charlie Plumb** was looking for an assistant. **Charlie Plumb** was the art end of ELLA CINDERS, And by the way, **Charlie Plumb** and **Bill Conselman** owned ELLA CINDERS. So **Charlie Plumb** had a studio just across the border, in Mexico. And Phil went to work for him, living down there. During that time, Phil came up with **Chris Crusty**, which was the second feature on the Sunday page.

Well, what happened was that Phil got sick and had to quit and came back to the States. Then the next thing that happened was that he got on with FEATURE COMICS and was doing the fighting bandleader —
LOU: *Swing Sisson.*
TEX: Swing Sisson, the Fighting Bandleader. Now, when he came back from the War, the first job he picked up was working on JANE ARDEN. It was kind of an interesting thing. JANE ARDEN was done by a guy named **Monte Barrett**, a newspaper editor down in San Antonio. And it was drawn by a man named **Russell Ross**, who lived in Beverly Hills, California. And Phil lived in Dallas. Well, what happened was that **Monte Barrett** would send **Russell Ross** the scripts, and **Russell Ross** would send Phil his part of it.
LOU: (Laughter.) *Okay.*
TEX: *(Laughter.)* And **Monte Barrett** was never aware of Phil at all! He was working for **Russell Ross**, but **Ross** never told **Barrett.**
LOU: *A ghost he didn't know about.*
TEX: But when **Monte Barrett** disappeared, Phil said, "That's it." He said, "I worked too hard; I'm getting out of the comic strip business." So he got into commercial art, he had his own business, and he did very well. I suppose he's retired now.
LOU: *So tell me about your involvement with Swing Sisson.*
TEX: Well, I met Phil, and I was studying life drawing under **John Knott**, who was a renowned editorial cartoonist for the DALLAS MORNING NEWS. And Phil and I were both in the class. His wife Wyvonne showed up as a model. She had been a dancer and a showgirl. But she was a costume model in the class before they got married, and I had to show her where she could take her clothes off. *(Laughter.)* In the meantime, before they got married, I was hanging around. And what Phil was having to do was write a synopsis, and get the syndicate to okay it. He was pencilling it, inking it, and lettering it, the whole schmeer. So after we got acquainted, I started coming up with these stories, and I ended up writing the thing. And he could concentrate on the drawing. Then he got married to Wyvonne. So I went and told Phil, "You know, you can build a following for the villains. We really ought to develop some villains we could use." So the first villain we had was a villainess, which was his wife, Wyvonne!
LOU: *Ah! What was her name, in the strip?*
TEX: Well, I'm telling you. Don't get ahead of the story.
LOU: *Sorry.*
TEX: So her name was Wyvonne. And that's the only correction we ever got from the magazine people [Quality Comics]. Her name was spelled W-Y-V-O-N-N-E, Wyvonne. And they figured we had misspelled the name Yvonne, so they took the W off, and that's the only correction they ever made, so we had to call her Yvonne after that. *(Laughter.)* They figured they'd finally caught us.

A trick of the trade was the six-finger gag. You know what the six-finger gag is?
LOU: *They'd draw somebody with six fingers?*
TEX: Well, what happened was, you see, these syndicate editors, they sit up there and they receive the strips and put them

“Hogart[illegible]ople were picking up comics work, even then.”



Tex studied under master anatomist Burne Hogarth.

through channels. They’ve got nothing to do all day, but receive the strips and put them through channels. And they get a little bored, so the first thing they do is start playing art director. *(Laughter.)* ’Cause, see, they have the say. They could make you do a strip over.

LOU: *They can do pretty well anything they want to.*

TEX: See, what you do, when you sense they’re becoming a little antsy, instead of having to do a whole panel or strip over, you give them things to find. You put six fingers on a hand, or you misspell a word. Well, when you find the six fingers, all you have to do is take out your razor blade and cut off the last finger, then touch it up a little bit, or when a word’s misspelled, they can slice out the word and paste in one that’s spelled correctly.

LOU: *And he’s got something to do and everybody’s happy.*

TEX: Right. So I figured the man at the magazine, we’d give him something to worry about that was easy to fix. Just cut the W off of Wyvonne.

But after I started writing — See, Phil had a unique thing there. Phil was getting to sign the Swing Sisson strip, and back in those days, even the guy who was doing Doll Man didn’t get to sign it. But Phil was signing his own work, and then I was ghosting it with him. And after I started writing it for him, they gave him three raises. And we were doing just fine. They were really complimenting him on the story improving, and so forth. Then World War II hit, and Phil went off into the Air Corps, and I went into the Army.

After the War, as I said, I was studying under **Burne Hogarth** up in New York. And a lot of Burne’s people were picking up comic work, even then. So I went up to **Ernie Bache’s** place on evening, and he was pencilling some pages of Swing Sisson. And he was making more money pencilling than we had been getting for doing the whole thing.

So at the Harvey Awards, I was sitting at the table with **Al Williamson** and **Sergio Aragones,** and I was telling them this anecdote. Of course, **Al Williamson** goes back to the beginning And I said, “You know, we were only getting $19.00 a page, which I thought was bad enough.” And **Al Williamson** said, “No, you weren’t. You were getting $9.00 a page.” And you know, he was right. And I said, “Al, you wore those jeans and ate those beans!” *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *And Al came in somewhere around 1950 or so. He was almost a generation or so younger than you. But don’t quote me, because I don’t know the exact date.**

**To be precise, Al came in with HEROIC COMICS #51, in 1948.*

TEX: **Mark Stokes,** my associate, was intrigued by this story. So he found a copy of FEATURE COMICS. Even though it was ours, Phil’s name was on it. He brought it to show to me, and there was one of my stories. I was wondering what I’d think about it, so I read it, and I said, “Not bad.” And thenI thought to myself, “Why are you surprised?” *(Chuckles.)* “After all, they bought it from you!”

And at that time, when I wrote those

"It turns out Bob Kane is only three years older than me."

things, I was 17 years old and Phil was 19. **Bob Kane** was only three years older than me. I also met **Joe Shuster,** and he was the exact antithesis of Superman. He had round shoulders, caved-in chest, receding hairline, bad complexion and bottle-top glasses. He looked like some high-school kid who started smoking too young. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Yeah, I remember the story about how he got picked up one time for vagrancy, because the cops thought he looked like a bum from the clothes he was wearing. And he flashed a whole roll of money and said, "Hey, I'm Superman!"* (Laughter.)

TEX: What happened was that **Joe Shuster** and **Jerry Siegel** figured that they weren't getting enough of a piece of the pie. So they sued Detective Comics for so much money that, if they'd won it, they would have put Detective Comics out of business.

LOU: *I knew they sued, but I didn't know they sued for that big an amount.*

TEX: It was several million dollars.

LOU: *Mmmmmm.*

TEX: So, they lost the suit and they lost the character. On the other hand, **Bob Kane,** who created Batman, his contract read that he could not draw for anybody but DC on this continent, on any foreign continent, or on any foreign planet. *(Laughter.)* They really believed in their propaganda. But, see, Bob didn't make waves. So he ends up with a house in Beverly Hills and a gorgeous-looking blonde, and looking great. When they came out with this Batman picture, I thought by this time he surely had to be dead. And it turns out he's only three years older than me!

It's an interesting thing. You see, the Batman that **Bob Kane** drew wasn't the slick-looking stuff that you've got now. But the characters were much more effective, because of what is called "suspension of belief." They become a drawing about something, rather than of something. And the one who was good at that was **Chester Gould,** with his villains in DICK TRACY. You know, **Chester Gould's** drawings were kind of styled, but the characters were much more effective because you could participate with them, in that style. And **Bob Kane's** characters were the same. I know that **Alfred Andriola** tried to introduce a set of villains also into KERRY DRAKE. But it was never as effective.

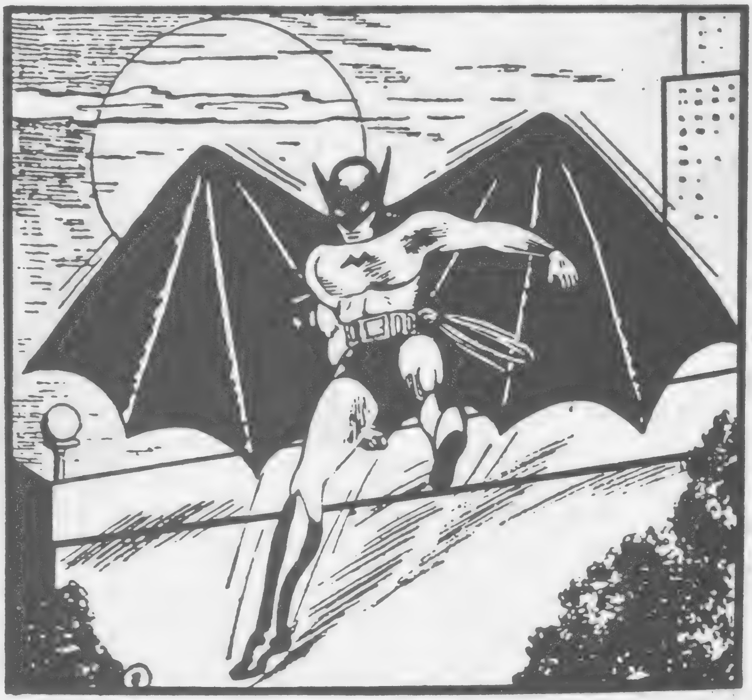
LOU: *Because they didn't have the TRACY look.*

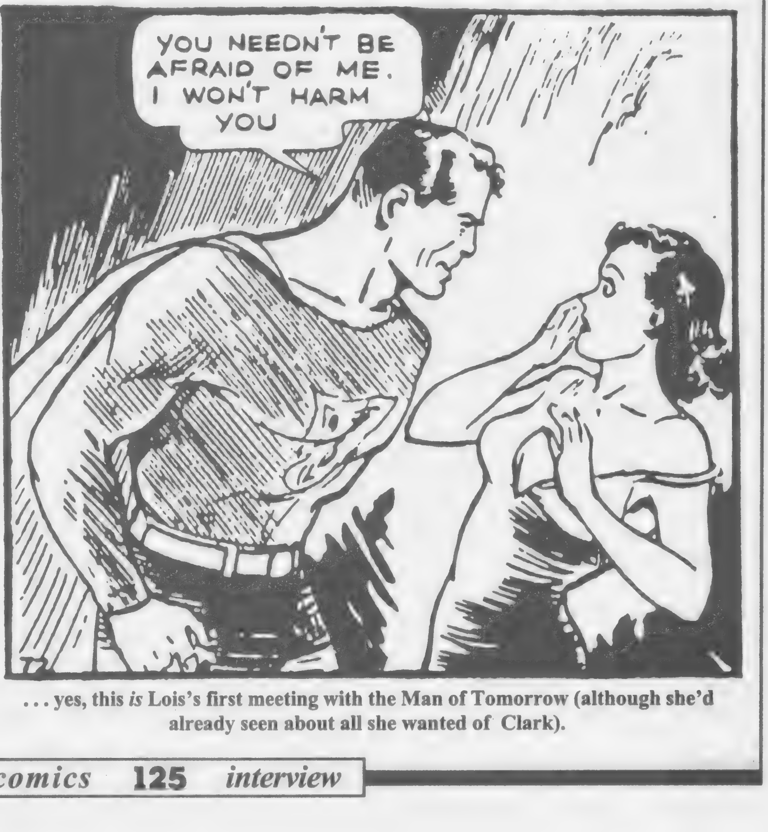
TEX: The thing is, it's a drawing about something, rather than of something. The closer to reality you get, the less impact you get.

LOU: *Yeah, you can't draw a realistic Penguin and make it work.*

TEX: You take, for instance, Jiggs and Maggie from BRINGING UP FATHER. Maggie could hit Jiggs with a rolling pin or a stack of dishes, and it didn't hurt. We

Here's a look at the very early Bob Kane Batman and the equally early Jerry Siegel/Joe Shuster Superman. The creators' relationships with their mutual publisher were as different as the characters themselves. And by the way . . .

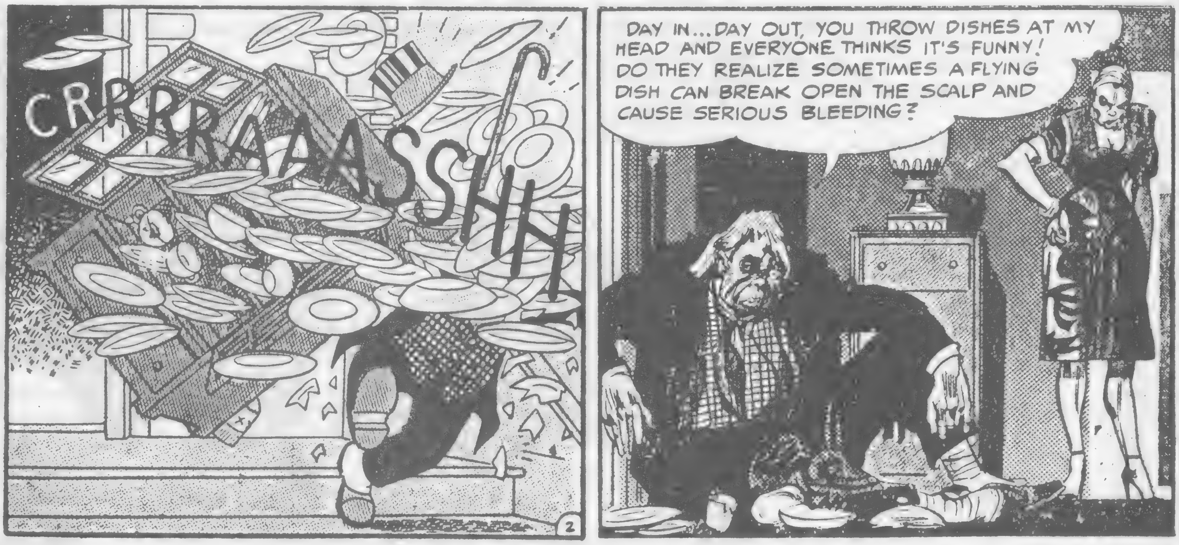



YOU NEEDN'T BE AFRAID OF ME. I WON'T HARM YOU

. . . yes, this *is* Lois's first meeting with the Man of Tomorrow (although she'd already seen about all she wanted of Clark).

"When I see the old cartoons, it's like ringing a fire bell."

A classic story from MAD #17: Will Elder and Bernard Kriegstein alternate pages to show a typical Jiggs & Maggie scene, followed by a more realistic aftermath.


CRRRRAAASSHH
2
DAY IN...DAY OUT, YOU THROW DISHES AT MY HEAD AND EVERYONE THINKS IT'S FUNNY! DO THEY REALIZE SOMETIMES A FLYING DISH CAN BREAK OPEN THE SCALP AND CAUSE SERIOUS BLEEDING?

weren't threatened because it was highly styled, and it caused suspension of belief. If **Milton Caniff** had drawn the same thing, it would have had an entirely different effect on you. It would have hurt us.

LOU: *It's interesting that you bring that up. Because way-back-when, in EC's MAD #17, they parodied BRINGING UP FATHER, and they did just that thing. They had the cartoony drawings that looked the way they did in the comic strips, and then on the facing pages, they'd have Bernie Krigstein, one of the great renderers of comics, draw what Jiggs would really look like if he'd had a rolling pin bounced off his noggin.* (Laughter.) *It brought you up really straight, so I know where you're coming from.*

TEX: What really attracted me to animation was the stuff they were doing back in the early days. Of course, they got more and more towards reality, and it doesn't have the same impact.

LOU: *Was that move around the time they started doing SNOW WHITE at Disney, or am I wrong?*

TEX: SNOW WHITE was on the way towards that development. But, of course, they began to get a different house look after awhile. For instance, the drawing on 101 DALMATIANS is a different approach than, say, PINOCCHIO.

LOU: *Both of which I liked.*

TEX: See, I look at those films from the Golden Age of Animation. "If back then the animation had looked like what they're doing now, would I have been attracted to it?" Probably not, because the new stuff doesn't do anything for me.

Every time I see one of the old ones, though, it's like somebody's ringing the fire bell. Because that's what I wanted to get into, you know. That thing.

LOU: *So take me back to your origin, Tex. What got you interested in becoming a cartoonist, an animator and such, back when you were a kid in Texas?*

TEX: Now, let me tell you something. I was drawing from the time I could hold a pencil. And I wasn't doing these scrawly things that babies do, I was drawing characters from the beginning. And I knew that that's what I was gonna do. Even when I was three years old, I knew that was gonna be it. But when I saw my first animated cartoon, that thing determined what kind of cartoonist I was gonna be. I was four years old.

Now, get this: my father, one Sunday afternoon, said, "Well, let's take him to the movies, see how he does." Try me out. Well, they never had a problem with me. I fell in love with motion pictures from the first. And the first one I saw was **Marilyn Miller,** who was a Broadway star, in a thing called Sally. It was part song and part silent. When she'd sing they'd have a soundtrack, and for the dialogue they'd have these title cards.

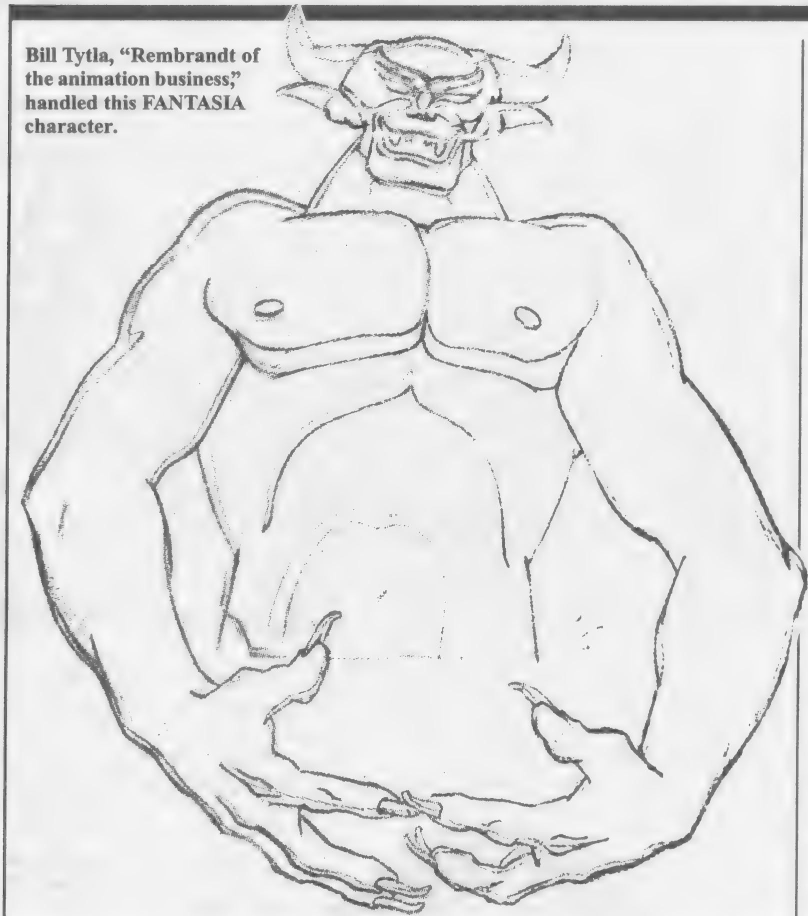
LOU: *Like THE JAZZ SINGER.*

TEX: Yeah. So, that first Sunday, I fell in love with that blonde on the screen. I couldn't stop talking about her. But the following Sunday, my father had an extra treat. "Let's go see this movie, 'cause they're going to have a Mickey Mouse." Because my father knew that he had a cartoonist on his hands, and it'd be something special for me. Well, when we got to the theater, Mickey hadn't arrived. They weren't going to have a Mickey Mouse. But they had a Van Bueren AESOP'S FABLE. Van Bueren was an outfit out of New York, so that's what we saw. They did run a cartoon, And I remember that cartoon. It was up at the North Pole. I can almost draw it, except when I'm concentrating I can't quite get it. But I can still see that thing. And that was when I knew. It was like a mandate. Everything was aimed in that direction. Because I was interested in show business. I was going to be an actor. In fact, I had a conflict of interest. When I saw my first motion picture, I knew I was gonna have to be part of that. And how was that gonna affect my drawing? My loyalty was strained. And then, suddenly, here was the perfect combination of the two. I could be in show business, and still be a cartoonist,

Then what happened was all I had to do was wait to get old enough. But when I was six, my mother took my sister and I out to Hollywood to visit my Uncle Joe. And Uncle Joe had a bottled water business, an electrified water business, in a store. He was one of my leading fans, he used to bring paper home for me to draw on. I was a moveable feast; everywhere I was I had to draw all the time. He came in one evening and he had a treat for me. The store next to his store was a whole storeful of cartoonists, and I was going to get to meet them.

So, when I went there, I was too shy to go very far. The room was full of people. But I remember this man, who had kind of a hog nose, an unruly mustache, and

“Something about Mickey was lacking in other cartoons.”



Bill Tytla, “Rembrandt of the animation business,” handled this FANTASIA character.

needed a haircut, leaning over me and shaking my hand, saying, “Well, when you get old enough, you’ll have to come and work with us.”

Now, I’m sure that I could have read the name on the window, it would have read, “The **Disney** Brothers.” Because that’s what they were called. **James Culhane,** one of the great animators in this business, loved that story.

LOU: So that was Walt and Roy back there.

TEX: But I had forgotten all about that when I went to work for **Disney,** and I didn’t remember it until recent years. And I wish that I had remembered it when I was working there, because Walt would have loved that story. He’d have gotten a kick out of it.

But the funny part about it was, at the time I didn’t know anything about Mickey Mouse. Uncle Joe kept talking about Mickey Mouse, Mickey Mouse, and there was no recognition at all from me. I’d never seen Mickey Mouse at the time, the only thing I’d ever seen was those things from New York. Well, later, when I finally did see a Mickey Mouse, I knew it was a difference. It was still in black and white, but there was something about that Mickey Mouse that was lacking in the other cartoons. I knew I was seeing something.

And of course, what put the cap on it was SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. Now, I saw SNOW WHITE when I was ten years old, and it would not necessarily have followed that I would have worked for the people who made it, except that about ten years later, there I was among them. I was 19 when I was working for **Disney.**

And a lot of the animators had moved on, but I was caught up with them all the way down the line. When I was in New York, I worked at Famous Studios, which had been the old **Max Fleisher** Studio. It was the second-largest animation studio. I was looking forward to working on Popeye, but I was typecast with the cute animators, and I ended up working on Casper the Friendly Ghost.

LOU: *Oh!* (Laughter.)

TEX: And I was kind of put out about it. I didn’t realize until much later that they had paid me an honor. Because the Casper unit was the elite unit, that was **Myron Waldman’s** unit, and that was the one that was making money for the studio. And I had been chosen to be in the Casper unit, and I had been honored and didn’t know it.

Anyway, at Famous, there was **Al Eugster,** who is one of the sad stories: **Al Eugster’s** name is on SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, and who can ask for a greater honor than that? Except he doesn’t have one line of animation in it. He animated the bed-building sequence, and they cut it out. And Al could never come to terms with that, you know. His name was on it, and he didn’t have any animation in it.

And **Bill Tytla** was there, who was the Rembrandt of the animation business. **Tytla** was a director for awhile, until he left. Then I worked for the supervisor of the animation department at Famous, who was **James Culhane.** James had been the animator of the “Hi-Ho” sequence in SNOW WHITE, which is considered one of the great tours de force in animation. Then, when I went to Colorado Springs, I set up the division of silent animation for a company which at that time was the world’s largest maker of shortening advertising films for theater and TV. I trained a staff there. And over on the stage was **Dave Hand.** Now, the second largest name on SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS is **Dave Hand.** He was the top director on Snow White, and he was Walt’s right-hand man. And what happened was, Dave had gone to England, and he was the one who had trained the British animation industry. It was **J. Arthur Rank** money.

Here’s a little guy Tex did some work on early in his animation career.

"I worked directly with Walt Disney. But I don't

LOU: *J. Arthur Rank I've heard of.*

TEX: And it must have been really great because, hey, they took him in this whole mansion — the studio was in this big manse, and the stables were the dormitories for the apprentice animators. And that's where **John Halas** and **Joey Batchelor** met. Halas & Batchelor was the biggest animation company in England, and they met there and the romance blossomed. Well, anyway, Dave's health broke, so he had to come back to the States. And he went up in Colorado, and discovered this film company there. It took him by surprise. They didn't have an animation department, and I'm sure that Dave was in no shape or mood to create one. So they made a live-action director of him.

And I used to go over there and visit with Dave, so we knew a lot of the same people. He always seemed kind of grateful that I'd come over and talk about old times. So there in Colorado Springs at the edge of town they had a thing called the Garden of the Gods, which is a valley with a lot of interesting rock formations in it. It's a big tourist attraction. Well, right there at the entrance to the Garden of the Gods is a resort called the Garden of the Gods Club. And one year Walt came out to spend his vacation there, which caused quite a flurry around the film company, whether Walt should be invited out to visit the film company, and who knew him well enough to do it.

LOU: *Protocol and such.*

TEX: And of course, in retrospect, the invitation should have come from **J. Don** and **Dean Alexander**, the guys who owned the joint, But that didn't occur to anybody. Well, George and I had both worked with Walt directly, and Walt remembered us. But over at the college, on the stage, was **Dave Hand**, who was a wheel. So Dave would be the one to come to Walt and ask him to come out to the studios. And an emissary was sent over to the stage to ask Dave to call Walt. And Dave's answer was, "Hell, no!" *(Laughter.)* "I'm not going to have anything to do with that sonofabitch!" *(Laughter.)* I don't really know what the problem between Dave and Walt was. But it's the story I tell to people when they ask, "Did you know **Walt Disney**?" Now, I worked directly with **Walt Disney.** But I don't even know if Walt's wife really knew **Walt Disney.**

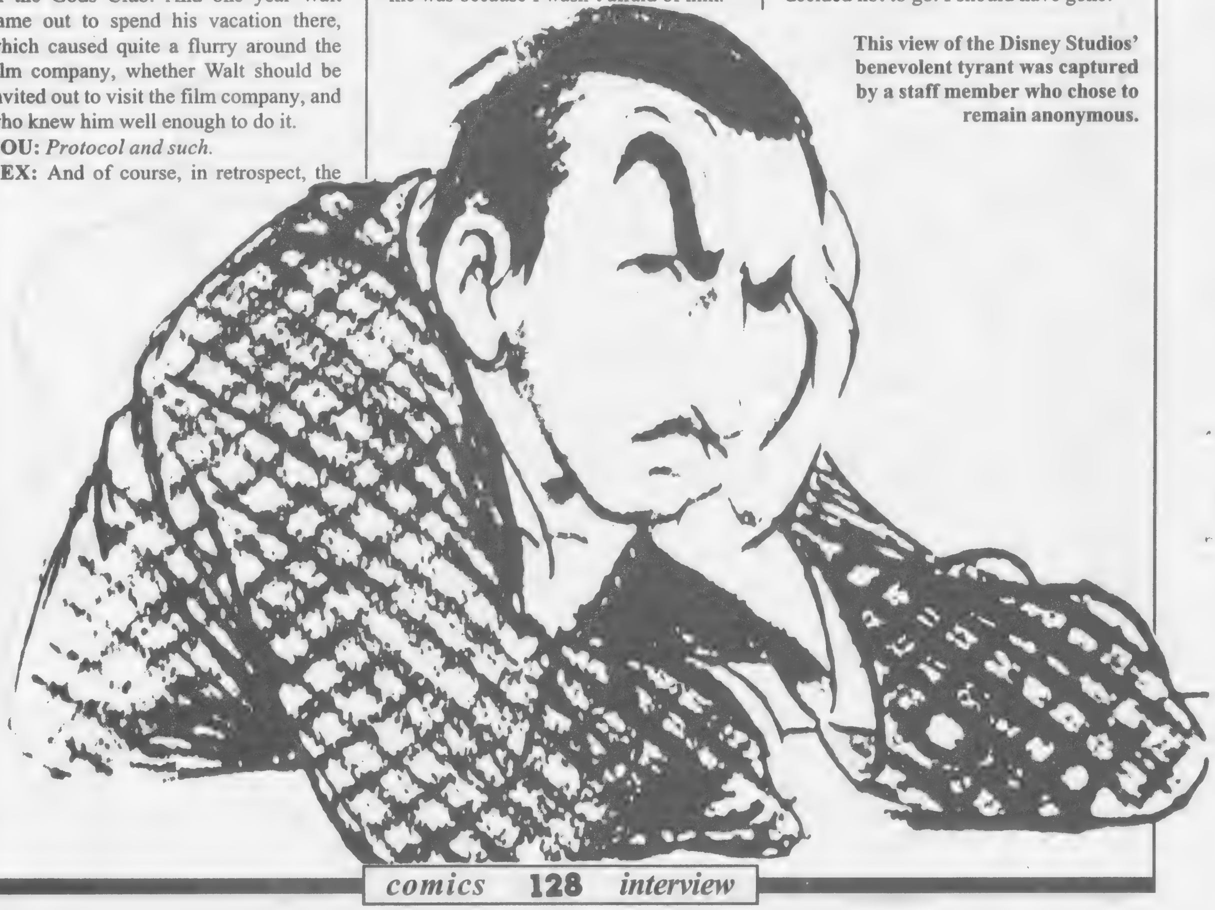
And I would not necessarily have worked with Walt directly, because there were a thousand artists working there when I was there. Except that I worked both in the story department and the animation department, so that I worked directly with Walt in the story end of things, and got acquainted with him. Walt liked me. And I think the reason he liked me was because I wasn't afraid of him.

LOU: *Everybody else was in awe of him?*

TEX: I was in awe of him! But he could shake them up. But I wasn't married, and I was just at the beginning of things, so I didn't have anything to lose. *(Laughter.)*

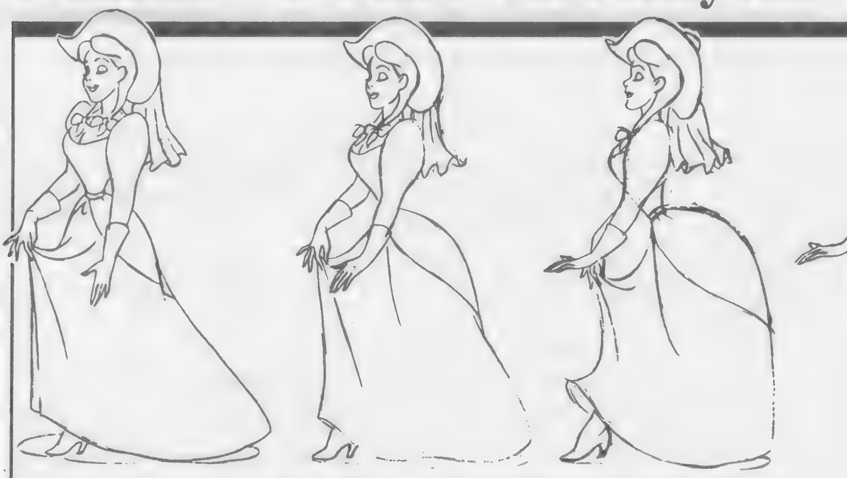
LOU: *Yeah. "I don't mind getting fired, I don't have a wife and kids and a mortgage!"* (Laughter.)

TEX: And see, I wasn't happy in California anyway. I hated Southern California. I was glad to get out of there. When I was in New York, Walt sent for me. Of course, I was offered more money than I was making. They had my apartment up at the studio, had me in the VIP lounge, wanted to know what the possibility of my coming back would be, and they said, "Well, he's pretty happy in New York." "Well, tell him to come see us if he goes on vacation." And they wrote me letters, how much they wanted me to come back and how much they would like me to work for the studio. I was being offered more money than I was making, and I was flattered, because, after all, who did Walt have to go after? That was some kind of recognition that I had made it. But the more I thought about going back to Southern California, the sicker I got. I finally decided not to go. I should have gone!

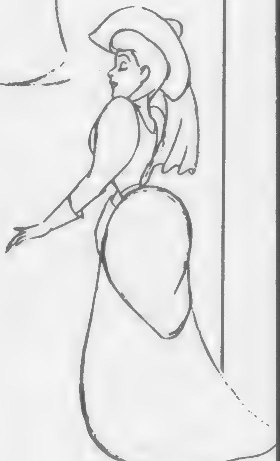


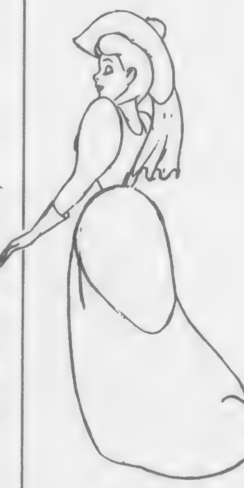
This view of the Disney Studios' benevolent tyrant was captured by a staff member who chose to remain anonymous.

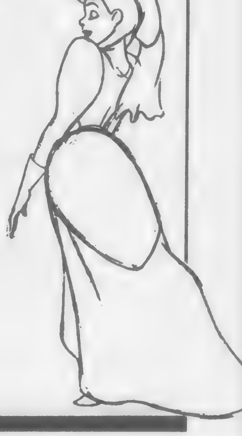
even know if Walt's wife really knew Walt Disney."



When Disney needed a "Pecos Bill" expert, Tex made himself one overnight. Here's a Milt Kahl animation sequence showing how Bill's girlfriend, Sluefoot Sue, walked.







LOU: *While we're still in Disney territory, you've got to tell me the story about PECOS BILL.*

TEX: Well, I was apprenticing up in the story department. At **Disney's**, they would let you apprentice in whatever department you wanted. When I was hired at Disney, I was hired as a story man. I had been writing for comic books. So when they found out how young I was, they said, "Look, learn your trade. Because around here, if things get tough, we can make pictures without a story man. We can't make them without animators." So that's the best piece of advice I didn't want to follow that I ever followed. Because when I became a story person after that, I knew the animator's problems. And to this day, I can do a storyboard that you can shoot from, because I came up through production.

Well, anyway, I had been working on duck shorts. But they called me up one day and said, "Hey, Tex, what do you know about Pecos Bill?" And of course, I knew that he was a legendary Texas character. I'd see his name on a book in a store in Dallas, and that was the extent of my knowledge about Pecos Bill. I'm all of 20 or 21 at the time, but right there I became an authority. I said, "Grew up on Pecos Bill stories! Know all about Pecos Bill!" So they said, "All right, report to **John Watbridge** tomorrow morning in Stories. You're assigned to the PECOS BILL unit."

So what I did that night was go down to the library, get out a book on American folk legends, read the chapter on Pecos Bill, and when I got there in the morning I knew as much as anybody there about Pecos Bill, and a lot more. *(Laughter.)*

They had a wonderful thing they were going to do there. See, we had a lot of picture plans that were ditched, and they had pieces left over. They were going to do a film about American folk legends. And they were going to have Pecos Bill, and Paul Bunyan, and Johnny Appleseed, and John Henry. Well, that thing never happened. And what they were going to do was go into live-action in whatever part of the country the story was set in, and work into the cartoon idea. Of course, they were going to go to Texas to shoot Bill's story. But it didn't work out, even though they got **Roy Rogers** to come do the narration on Pecos Bill, and I met Roy at the studio.

LOU: *I didn't know you ever met Roy Rogers.*

TEX: Oh, yeah. I knew Roy and Dale both.

LOU: *How'd you get to meet both of them?*

TEX: Because I met **Roy Rogers** originally there at Disney on PECOS BILL, and then later on I was in New York, and they were both with the rodeo, and I got invited to a party with them afterward. Of course, **Dale Evans** is from Texas, and she was just a real bail, you know. So I got a kick out of meeting her, more than meeting him, really.

LOU: *Yeah, I got to see her once in college, myself.*

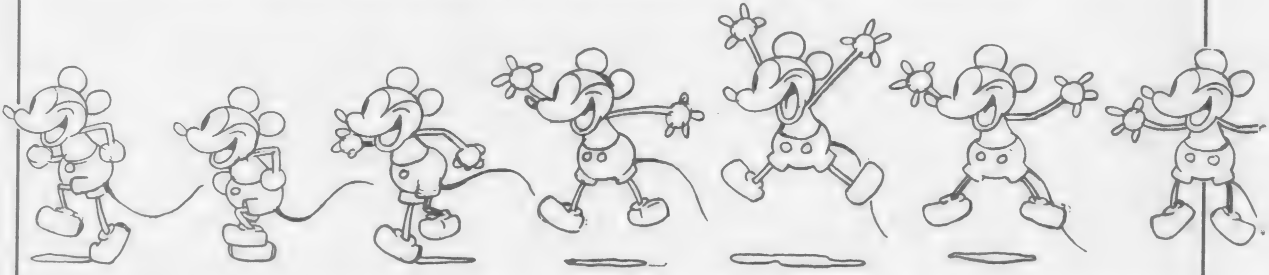
TEX: But **Disney** had all of these plans, which didn't work out, unfortunately. And they were going to do another picture called MR. CURRIER AND MR. IVES, in which they were going to show a **Currier** and **Ives** print and then fade into an animated thing along the theme of the print. And CASEY JONES was left over from that, and so was ONCE UPON A WINTERTIME and CASEY AT THE BAT.

LOU: *Oh, I remember that. I loved that one.*

TEX: It's an interesting thing about

“Terrytoons and so forth are doing well in India.”

Mickey might not look so cheerful if he knew his ’toons were losing $25,000 each toward the end.



CASEY AT THE BAT. They originally were going to have **Jimmy Durante** narrate it. There wasn’t any dialogue in it. They had **Durante** out there, and he had a whole entourage that went around with him. And they were saying what they wanted to talk about, and some guy who was kind of a Greek chorus there, when they’d say what they wanted, would say, “That’s right! That’s right! You haven’t got a picture without the Schnozz!” *(Laughter.)* But he wanted too much money, so we got Jerry Colonna.

LOU: *The Bob Hope guy.*

TEX: Yeah, the guy with the big mustache.

LOU: *I’m surprised. I didn’t know about that one.*

TEX: What happened with the Legends picture was that they animated PECOS BILL and JOHNNY APPLESEED, but they never made JOHN HENRY. **George Pal’s** Puppetoons did that one. And PAUL BUNYAN was too expensive, so they finally did a limited thing with Paul Bunyan much later. **Lance Nolley,** who was from Dallas, by the way, was the one who came up with the treatment for it. They made a more limited animation, because the thing was just too involved for them.

LOU: *Was that in the 50’s?*

TEX: Well, that was in the ’60s, I think. A lot of the stuff at Disney’s would stay on the shelf till they could get around to it. They had a bunch of stuff like that.

LOU: *Yeah, they exhumed PAUL BUNYAN for NBC’s WONDERFUL WORLD OF COLOR.*

TEX: Yeah, they were already on TV. But here’s an interesting thing: when I left Disney’s, he was losing $25,000 for every short he made.

LOU: *Oh, good lord!*

TEX: It cost him $75,000 to make a short. Now, Disney had a unique thing. 60% of it was overhead, ’cause he had a major lot of overhead, whereas the other cartoon studios were under the umbrella of the parent company. It takes six years for that short to make the round of all the theaters, and in that six years it would get a rental of $50,000, which means you’re $25,000 in the hole. Now, the subsequent rereleases, which you had before you had TV, you make the other $25,000. But you don’t have it now. And you’d better hope the money comes from someplace, because the payroll goes on.

So what happened was, in one year, the thing that saved **Disney’s** ass was this: He had to keep making the shorts in order to keep the characters alive, to keep the enterprises and licensing based on them alive. That was the big thing. Plus, he had a contract with RKO to deliver so many shorts a year, and he had to fulfill that contract. Now what happened in one year was this: RKO was sold to Desilu. And Desilu wasn’t in the business that RKO was in, so **Disney** lost his release. And he immediately set up his own release, which was Buena Vista, named after the street that runs in front of the studio. And then he could stop making the shorts which were costing him $25,000 apiece. *(Laughter.)* And, too, he had a subsidized showcase for the characters, because that’s the year Disneyland came on TV, and he didn’t have to make the shorts to promote them anymore.

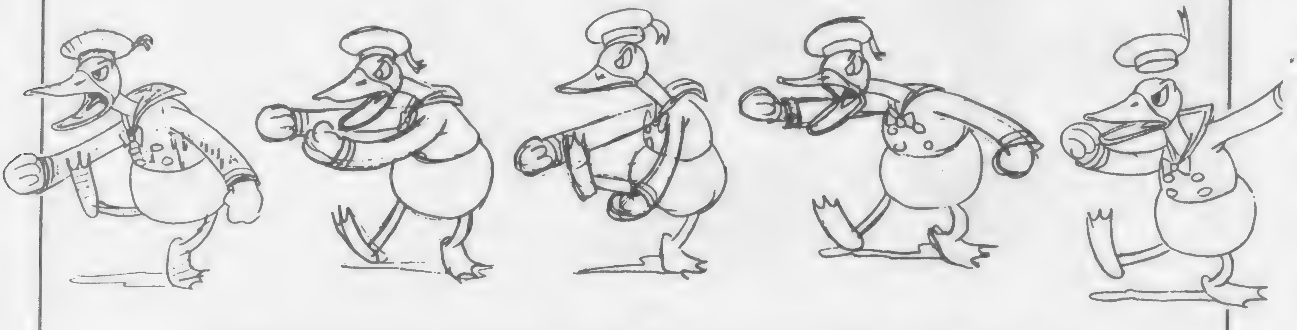
LOU: *That’s when it all came together.*

TEX: I talked to Buena Vista, and they have let the shorts languish, because they say it costs too much even to send them out and bring them back. So when the prints wear out, they just ditch them, and they don’t make any more shorts. But the thing now is, they’ve got these VCR outlets, the Disney Channel, they’ve got all kinds of places where they can show them, but they haven’t been supplying shorts to the theaters.

LOU: *They just don’t show cartoons in theaters anymore, unless it’s a feature cartoon.*

TEX: Well, they do around the world, but they don’t here. Now, the Terrytoons and so forth are doing very well in India or anyplace where they still run the shorts, and they can send any kind of cartoon crap over there, and they’ll run it and they’ll get rentals from it.

LOU: *I didn’t know about that. Must have been ages since you’ve gone to a*



Donald might look even more upset if he knew his ’toons were losing $25,000 each toward the end.

"We learned animation by studying Chaplin."

theater in the U.S. and seen a cartoon before the main feature.

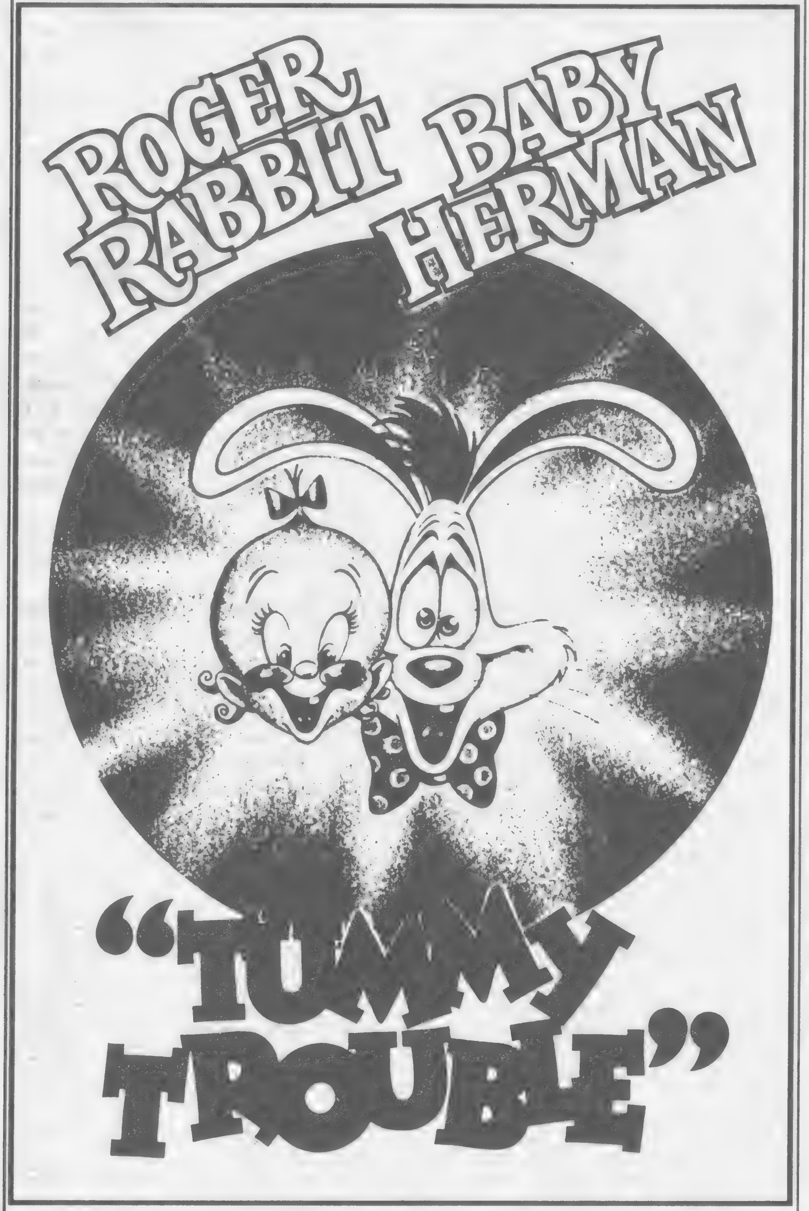
TEX: The thing is, now they're beginning to experiment. Warners has been kind of making them one at a time, to feel out if there's any kind of a market for that thing. And the Disney people are beginning to release, as a package, some of the old shorts again as a package with their feature movies.

LOU: *That's good. I hope they do manage to make that work, because as far as I know, the cartoons in the movies died somewhere in the early '70s.*

TEX: Well, there's a whole new crowd now that haven't had a chance to see them.

LOU: *But whenever they rerelease the cartoon feature movies in the cinemas from Disney, they just clean up.*

TEX: Well, let me tell you why it cleans up. It's from the classic days. For instance, in a year they'll come out with live-action stuff, and maybe a cartoon feature and so forth, which makes a lot of money in the theater but doesn't do much for enterprises. But then they'll throw in 101 DALMATIANS, and they, get well. Anytime they trot out those classic cartoons, there's a feeling about them. THE LION KING is one-dimensional.



A few Hollywood studios — Disney among them — are starting to experiment, just a teeny-weeny bit, with new cartoon shorts.

LOU: *I haven't seen it, so I won't comment.*

TEX: It's one-dimensional. The Disney films are one-dimensional, see. Because the guys who did that original animation were actors. And you look at the films that were made, and they keep getting away from you, they keep taking on identities of their own. You keep trying to remind yourself, "Wait a minute, these are just drawings." You never get the same impact now, looking at the new stuff. They are never anything but animated drawings, which is all right, because the animated cartoon was never intended to be anything but moving drawings. Except at Disney's, they got into another dimension. They would act. You see, there is such a thing as animation from the inside, and then there is imposed animation. Animation from the inside is where you become part of the character, and the gestures and everything are dictated from whatever that character would be. You don't anticipate it, it just happens, Whereas imposed animation is where something moves just because you make it move. In that, you get a lot of false actions and so forth, because these guys are trying to duplicate what was happening in animation from the inside, and it's not the same source.

What the new crowd ought to do, if they want to recapture some of the stuff, is don't look at the old cartoons. Where they need to go is where we came from. We learned animation by studying **Chaplin.**

LOU: *Charlie Chaplin?*

TEX: **Charlie Chaplin** is the daddy of timing for animated cartoons.

LOU: *Old silent movies, right.*

TEX: And **Chaplin** would clip out frames for access, the same way we would work out timing charts. Chaplin would edit out frames of a film for impact.

LOU: *I didn't know any of this. It's a revelation to me.*

TEX: At Disney's, we could spend a whole afternoon looking at a **Chaplin** film, and get paid for studying them. That was the source of classic animation, it was the **Chaplin** films.

LOU: *Before we get off of Disney, which we are going to do because I want to talk about Jay Ward, Rocky and Bullwinkle and all that other stuff, I want to throw a couple of names at you from Disney's set, and see if you met them. One of them is Ub Iwerks. Was he out of the picture by the time you came in?*

TEX: Oh, no. Ub was head of the special

"Ub Iwerks knew more about animation than Walt ever would."

art division. See, Ub knew more about animation than Walt would ever know. But Ub was not the showman Walt was.

LOU: *Or the businessman, either, perhaps.*

TEX: No, he wasn't. But anytime you wanted to solve something, you went to Ub. For instance, Ub was the one who helped develop Technicolor. They would give him film to experiment with, so that they could use his experiments. He was a genius. Anytime they would train for some kind of special effect, Ub's department was the one that solved it. Now, of course, Ub was Walt's first animator. They had known each other in Kansas City. And then Ub had come out with Disney, and what happened was that **Pat Powers,** who had developed the sound for Disney films and who had been their sound man, hired Ub away from Walt. Ub did FLIP THE FROG for him, you see. That didn't work out, and Ub came back. But Walt and Ub were never friends after that any more.

LOU: *Walt felt that Ub had betrayed him?*

TEX: Well, that's just the kind of guy Walt was, you know. He didn't forgive you. But of course, Ub was valuable to him, so they talked business, but they were never friends again. Lot of people don't know about that, that's sort of an inside thing. But I was there, and knew him good.

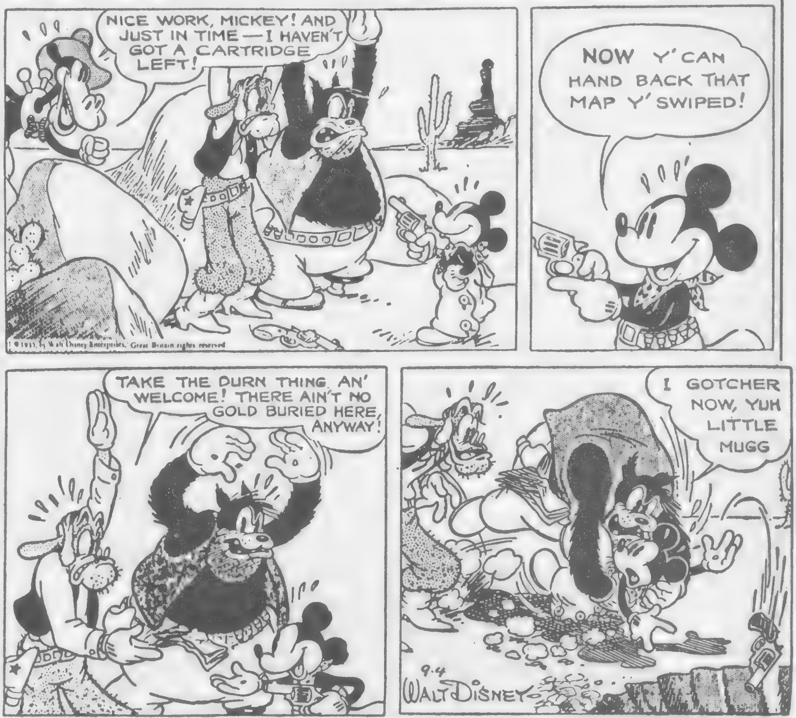
LOU: *How's about Carl Barks?*

TEX: I never met **Carl Barks,** to my knowledge. Of course, **Carl Barks** was doing the comic book stuff.

LOU: *I think he did some animation early on, when he started out.*

TEX: He started out in the animation department. But he was one of the few guys that got to sign his work. When they started the DONALD DUCK comic strip, Walt said that whoever draws the comic strip — See, Ub was the first to draw a Disney comic strip, Mickey Mouse, and then they got **Floyd Gottfredson** in there, who became head of the comic strip department. I'll tell you about him in a minute. But anyway, Walt used to use Ub's name in the credits for the MICKEY MOUSE strip. But King Features Syndicate said, "No! We're signing it 'Walt Disney'!" So you had to sign Walt's name to it. So they worked out this cartoon signature for Walt Disney, which became the corporate signature for the Disney films. Now, Walt didn't know how to do that signature. *(Laughter.)* So the keepers of the signature were **Floyd Gottfredson** in the comic strip, and **Hank Potter** in Special Arts. And any artwork that had to be signed with that Disney name, he went to one or the other. And with all the stuff coming in, there were a few of us who could sign it, and I was one of those who could do the Disney signature.

Floyd Gottfredson was one of the "keepers" of the famous Disney signature — which, as is widely known, Walt himself was unable to duplicate. Our interview subject was another of the artists able to reproduce it.


NICE WORK, MICKEY! AND JUST IN TIME—I HAVEN'T GOT A CARTRIDGE LEFT!
NOW Y'CAN HAND BACK THAT MAP Y'SWIPED!
TAKE THE DURN THING AN' WELCOME! THERE AIN'T NO GOLD BURIED HERE, ANYWAY!
I GOTCHER NOW, YUH LITTLE MUGG
© 1933, by Walt Disney Enterprises, Great Britain rights reserved
9-4
WALT DISNEY

LOU: *You forged it, right.*

TEX: So we did that, but we were as qualified as Walt was. But an interesting thing happened recently. They have over at the Galleria a thing called the Hall of History, in which they have these signatures framed. They had a couple in there signed **"Walt Disney."** One was selling for $3,000 and the other was selling for $6,000, which I thought was bad enough. But a guy I knew over there, he was just leaving and he wanted to tell me about a coup he'd done that day. He'd sold one of those signatures for $36,000. So I said, "What could be worth —"

LOU AND TEX TOGETHER: " — 36,000 dollars?" *(Laughter.)*

TEX: Well, he had this Donald Duck drawing. And a woman had signed it. See, if you knew the players, you know who did it, because each had their own little style. Walt's was kinda stiff. So the people had paid $36,000 on the assumption that **Walt Disney** had drawn that Donald Duck. And I didn't want to rain on these guys' parade, but before I could stop myself, there I came: "No way did Walt draw that Donald Duck!" In fact, it wasn't even an original drawing. When I was at Disney's, down in the mail room they had hundreds of pictures of the characters. Anytime a character would get a fan letter, they'd just put one in an envelope and send it out. I used to go out and get fistfuls of those Donald Duck drawings and give it to kids in the neighborhood. *(Laughter.)* Now, I know that if somebody's spent $36,000 for that thing, they had $36,000 that they could afford to lose. And it wasn't any of my business. But I was offended that somebody had paid $36,000 on the assumption that **Walt Disney** had drawn that Donald Duck. But It took me a year to get over that.

LOU: *I thought you were going to tell me that that was one of the signatures that you did.* (Laughter.)

TEX: It was by a woman. I won't say who it was, but we could tell when Walt did it, But the drawing was one of those things out of stock.

Let me tell you about **Floyd Gottfredson.** Now, this thing is really remarkable. I have never read this anywhere about Floyd, and I don't know why, because it would certainly be an inspiration. Floyd, when he was a boy in Wyoming or North Dakota or someplace, was

"Stowkowski's real name was Leo Stokes."

out hunting deer, tried to go through a fence and a shotgun went off and mangled his right hand. And Floyd was pencilling the Mickey Mouse strip, and it was beautiful. He'd stick a blue pencil in that hand, and he couldn't move his fingers, but he could move the arm. You draw with your whole arm, anyway, and he'd turn out such beautiful stuff.

LOU: *I know. I've seen the old strips, they're excellent.*

TEX: And then a guy named **Dick Moores** —

LOU: *GASOLINE ALLEY?*

TEX: Yeah, but then he was at Disney, and he was inking the-thing, which was a real honor. Dick was also inking the Sunday CARIOCA, and then the Sunday UNCLE REMUS. See, Dick had been **Chester Gould's** assistant on DICK TRACY. And then he came out with a strip of his own called JIM HARDY, and that worked into WINDY AND PADDLES. And when that fell through, he went to work at Disney's in the comic strip department. But he had the honor of inking Floyd's drawings.

Now, I always figured that, okay, Floyd could pencil it, but he had to have somebody to ink at. One day they were running behind an the comic strip department, and I looked in there and there was Floyd with a brush in his fist, inking this strip. He could do the whole thing!

LOU: *With his withered hand.*

TEX: With his withered hand, yes!

LOU: *That's incredible.*

TEX: It was beautiful, you know. And he was writing the whole thing, he could write it, he could letter it, he could pencil it, and he could ink it. He could do the whole operation. But every time I read about him I kept looking for some mention of this, and you'd see these pictures of him and you didn't see his hand.

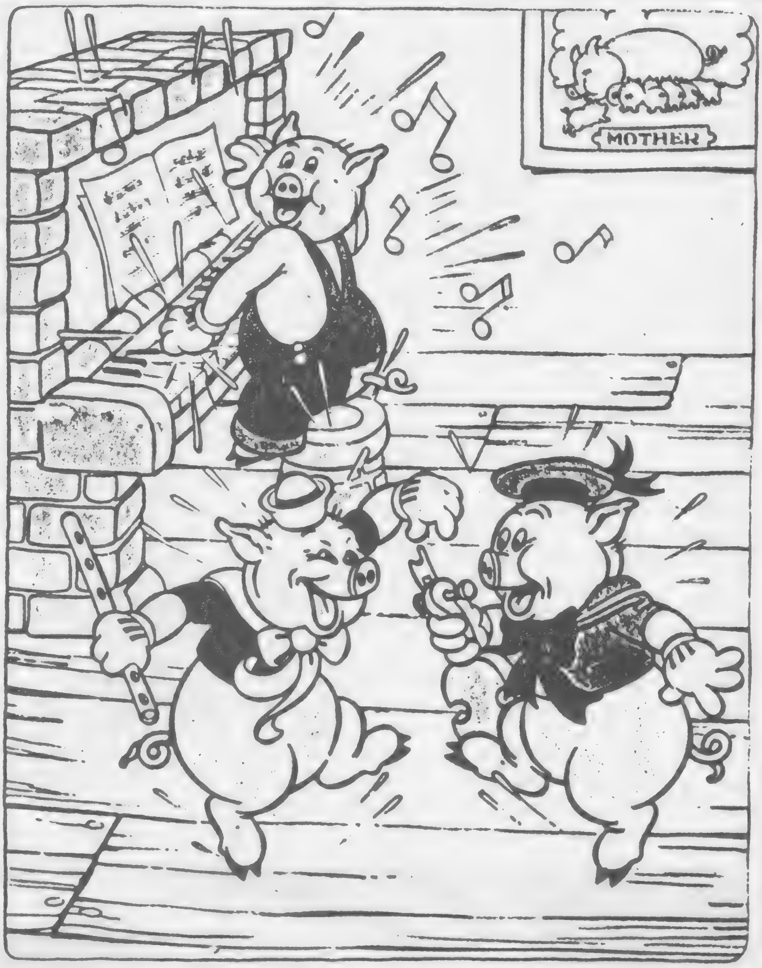
LOU: *Because they cut it out, probably.*

TEX: And I was beginning to think that I'd dreamed it. *(Laughter.)* Until one day there was a picture of him with all the rest and there was his hand, his withered hand. And they have never pointed that out. But, boy, I was really impressed that Floyd, and **Carl Barks,** too, lived to work so long at Disney. They were there many years. And of course, **Carl Barks** was allowed to sign the stuff himself. Nobody else could — at least, Floyd was never allowed to sign his stuff. *(Laughter.)* But to my knowledge, I never met **Carl Barks.**

LOU: *Was FANTASIA before your time?*

TEX: Oh, yes.

LOU: *And I imagine the big strike was before you got there, too.*



TEX: Yes. But you see. I worked on FANTASIA after the fact.

LOU: *Oh, okay. Tell me something about this.*

TEX: Well, the way FANTASIA came about, Mickey was the masthead character for the studio, and he'd kinda gotten lost in the shuffle. THREE LITTLE PIGS won an Academy Award, and Donald Duck was the most popular character, and the features were coming on, and Mickey had kinda gotten lost there. So Walt was trying to find some way to showcase Mickey, And he was at a Hollywood party, and **Leopold Stokowski** was there, the noted conductor. He was out there making a film, as a matter of fact, with **Deanna Durbin,** A HUNDRED MEN AND A GIRL, which I don't know if you remember or not.

LOU: *I've heard of it.*

TEX: And by the way, **Leopold Stokowski's** real name was **Leo Stokes.** *(Laughter.)* He was an Englishmen and he came over here. He was a genius, and he sounded like a Cockney. But he didn't think anybody would take somebody seriously by the name of **Leo Stokes,** and Russian composers were in vogue, so he became **Leopold Stokowski.**

LOU: (Laughter.) *Okay.*

TEX: So Walt was talking to **Leopold Stokowski,** and **Stokowski** says, "Well, you know, there's a symphonic piece that would be perfect for Michael." He called Mickey "Michael."

LOU: *"Michael!!"* (Uproarious laughter.)

TEX: *(Laughter.)* "That's THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE." Walt says, "Well, come out to the studio and we'll talk about it." So they decided to do it. And **Stokowski** directed it with a pick-up orchestra out on the coast. There was publicity in the paper, featuring **Stokowski** and Walt together. But when **Stokowski** got a look at what they were doing around there, he flipped! He says, "This is wonderful!" He says, "We ought to make a whole feature of this symphonic music!" And **Roy Disney** said, "You know, Walt, he may have a point, 'cause

"I tell people I worked on FANTASIA after the fact."

we're never gonna get our money out of this thing." Well, what he did, he got 'em in deeper then (MUCH laughter). Because now they got **Deems Taylor,** who was a noted music critic and a radio personality. He used to narrate the Saturday afternoon operas for the Met. Anyway, they began to pick out pieces they could use. Then they got into stereophonic sound. And so it turned out that to even show it, the theater would have to close up for a week, rewire it, and then show it. See, they're all wired for stereophonic sound now, but back then they weren't.

So then they decided they would make it a road-show thing, a concert thing. And they would substitute pieces from time to time. So they had a number of these pieces on storyboard, I saw one of them, CLAIR DE LUNE. To get it off the shelf, they wrote a thing called BLUE BAYOU and put it in one of what they called "package pictures." which were fragments of discarded enterprises.

So anyway, they did this feature. Then about the time they finished it, World War II hit, and the European market was gone, which would have been a big market for them. And the government says, "You can't build any more fantasizers, because we need the electronic equipment for the War effort, for radar." So the whole thing, that whole idea, was never gotten back to.

Well, after the war, they had started on the board — see, they had to shelve everything, because they did training films and so forth during the war — they decided to go ahead and finish PETER AND THE WOLF and do that. And so, I was one of the story team on PETER AND THE WOLF. So I tell people, "I worked on FANTASIA, but after the fact." Because, after all, it was originally intended to go into FANTASIA. I was a kid in high school when FANTASIA hit, but later I was a story man on FANTASIA.

So I was working on PETER AND THE WOLF And the first day, in the first story conference, we're waiting for Walt, who's a little late. And he finally comes in, he sits down, looks around, and the first words he says were, "Well, I'm sure glad we don't have to fight that fat bastard Stokey on this one!"

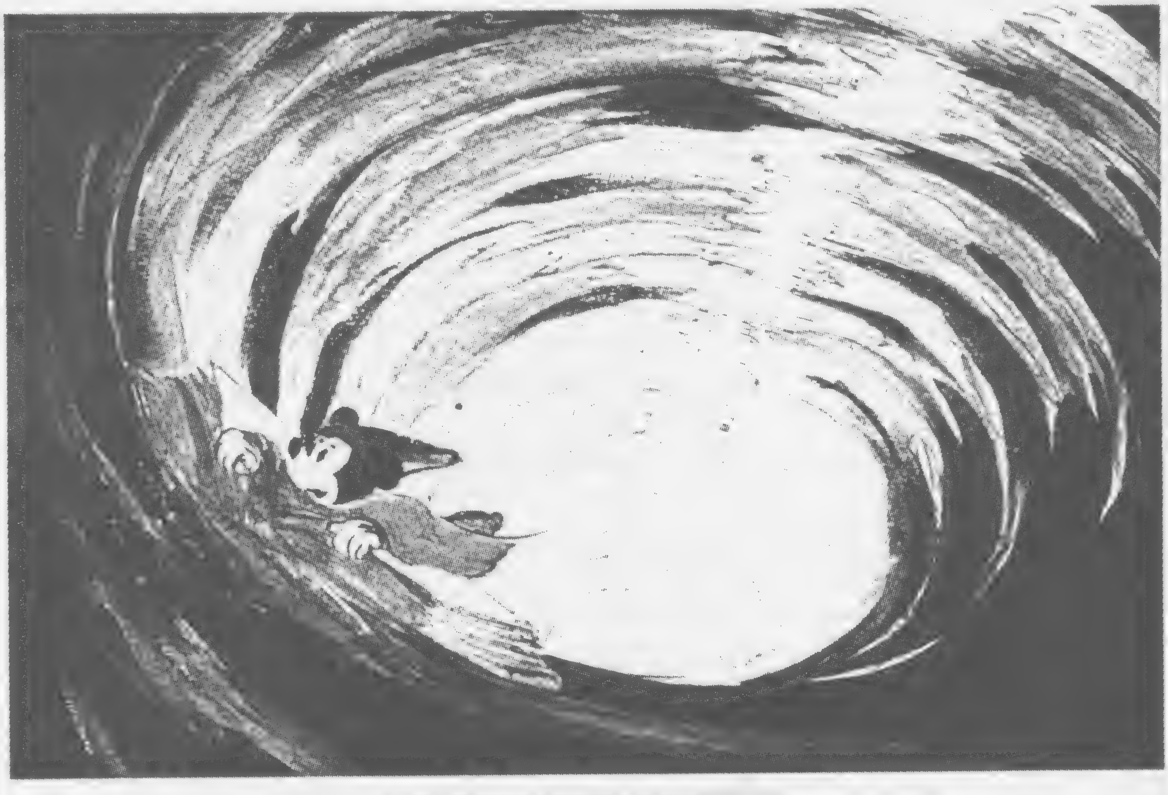
So he thought **Stokowski** had sold him a bill of goods. See, Walt would look down that line and here's FANTASIA in the red. It hadn't made the money back. Of course, I don't think Walt ever understood FANTASIA. His people did, and I'm sure that Walt learned quite a bit, because Walt was a pretty sharp cookie but FANTASIA was not Walt's type of thing. He was a storyteller. And of course, the guys welcomed the opportunity to do that because that's where they were artists. But I'll tell you something interesting: there was a mystique about FANTASIA. An now you can buy it in the grocery store. It's just another cartoon.

LOU: *Yeah. The first time I got to see it, the mystique was still there, because I'd been hearing about FANTASIA as long a I'd been hearing about animation and movies. They said, "Hey you've gotta see FANTASIA." But I never got an opportunity because they never released it where I was. They finally released it probably in the early Eighties in a theater I wet to, long before they did it on a videocassette. And I said "Great! I finally get a chance to see it!" And I enjoyed it you know. And now, bang, like you said, anybody can pick it up in a store. They didn't even show it on TV when I was growing up. I was probably over 30 years old before I had a chance to see it, after hearing about it for about twenty years.*

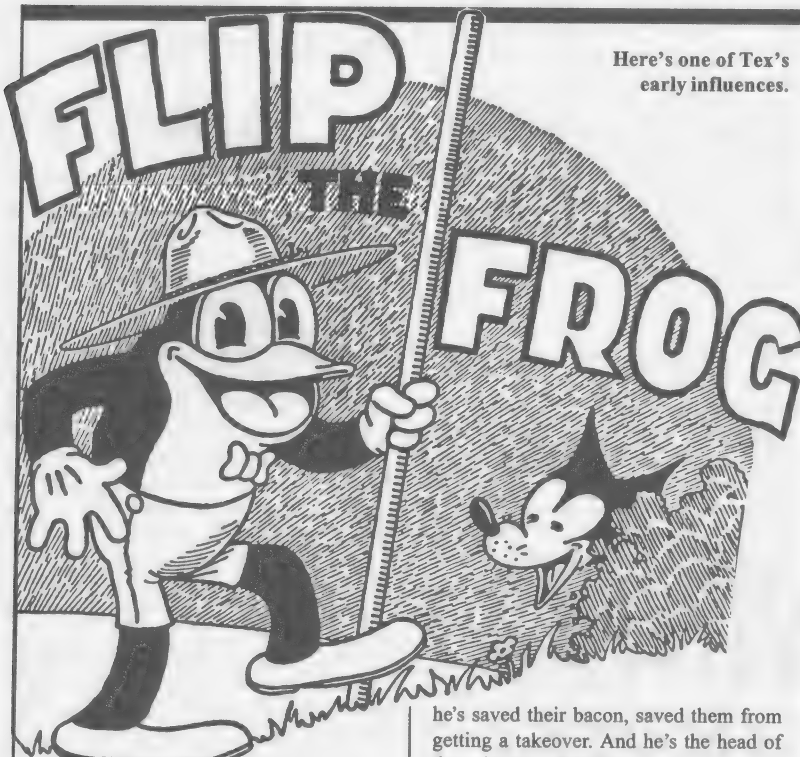
TEX: It's just another cartoon now, although very well done. And now they're making FANTASIA II.

LOU: *Oh, no!*

TEX: And the thing that's interesting is how it came about. They had a lot of stuff on storyboards which was never aimed at FANTASIA, that was never produced.



"I loved BULLWINKLE. 'How can I get in on it?'"



Here's one of Tex's early influences.

And I used to walk around at some of the empty rooms at Disney and look at the storyboards, and I saw stuff that was due to come years later. I saw the storyboards for LADY AND THE TRAMP, and so forth. They were ten years ahead on everything. I could hear something great. I'd want to tell them great. I'd want to tell the studio about it, and they'd already had it fixed up. So a bunch of stuff on FANTASIA was back there, and my impression,I may be wrong, is that they said, "Well, what the heck . . . we've got it already, why don't we just produce this stuff?" And that may or may not be what happened. I don't know, but that would make sense to me. Because they already have solved a lot of the problems and the groundwork was already done there.

LOU: *The last thing about Disney: since Walt's brother Roy is still alive and still at Disney, what was your impression of him?*

TEX: You're talking about Roy, Jr. He's still at Disney.

LOU: *Oh, it's Roy's son? I was thinking of Walt's brother.*

TEX: They're both dead, Walt and Roy. I liked Roy, personally. Last time I saw **Roy Disney** was in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria. We were riding up in the elevator together, and I said hello to him. Roy was a real nice guy. And of course, his son was always known as "Walt's idiot nephew." *(Laughter.)* But he's saved their bacon, saved them from getting a takeover. And he's the head of the animation department.

LOU: *That's good. Okay, in transition between Walt and Jay Ward, what got you out of Walt, what got you into Jay Ward, and what was the gap between?*

TEX: Oh, good Lord! I was seven years in New York, and then I was in Colorado Springs for five years. And by that time, an animation business had sprung up in Dallas. I came back to work here. In the meantime, they had started this afternoon thing of BULLWINKLE. And it was love at first sight. I loved BULLWINKLE, and I was plotting, "How can I get in on it?" I didn't know anything about it.

But there was a guy named **Dick Thompson** who had been the head of Cherbusco, which was the big motion picture company in Mexico. It had been owned by RKO. So **Howard Hughes** had sent **Thompson** down there to run the company. Then **Hughes** became a recluse, and **Thompson** couldn't get him to give him any information or direction, so he gave up and started an animation studio down there. He came up to Dallas on some kind of convention, and I got to talk to him, and it turned out that there was a bunch of my buddies working down there in Mexico on BULLWINKLE. That's the first time I knew about it. So I wrote down there, making feelers, and they hired me.

Now, what they hired me for: they were in trouble. You see, on the West Coast and the East Coast, everybody is a specialist. Whereas in the middle of the country, we had to do everything. Some of them would know how to put the picture together, but not how to animate it. So I was hired because they were running a month behind, and I was supposed to put them back on schedule. My title was Assistant to the Production Manager. So I started up in the ink and paint department, because that was the department that fed camera. The camera ran 24 hours a day. I was also there to try and get something on **Carlos Rodriguez.** They wanted him out of there, because he was too popular. Carlos was an old Disney man, but he was a Mexican national. And Carlos and I, of course, had a lot of the same friends. *(Laughter.)* He became one of my best friends! And there was nothing wrong with Carlos's department.

LOU: *So there was a conflict there.*

TEX: So they wanted a report, and I said, "Well, he's more efficient than any other department you've got here." Anyway, I worked my way down through all the departments, and finally began to animate it, and after a year I got that thing on schedule. And I was trimmed off.

LOU: *They used you for what you were worth and then dumped you?*

TEX: See, Americans down there were just taking the money. They didn't send the very best. And I was the first one the Mexicans ran into that could help them. But when I was let go, they went en masse upstairs, and said, "No, you've finally sent somebody down here who can help them, and he's the one you're sending home." So I went home. But when they set up the second studio, Animatio International, to do commercials — See, the money behind BULLWINKLE was General Mills, the cereal people. The real impetus was, since they were backing BULLWINKLE, and UNDERDOG, and KING LEONARDO, and TENNESSEE TUXEDO, all being done in Mexico, they figured they might like to use some of these characters in their commercials as a tie-in. The first commercials they got out of there were a different proposition than BULLWINKLE, and were a real disappointment. So they decided to set up a blue-ribbon unit to do commercials for the States, and to open up Mexican markets. That's why they sent me down again, and I headed this new studio.

But I never met **Jay Ward**. I didn't work for **Jay Ward.** I worked for Producers Associates Television, which was the money out of New York. And you know, people are saying, "Well, he heads up **Jay Ward's** animation Company." I never met **Jay Ward.** As a matter of fact, the only thing we ever did for **Jay Ward** was the BULLWINKLE show, and HOPPITY HOOPER.

LOU: *That was enough.*

TEX: The rest of the shows came out of Total Television in New York.

LOU: *UNDERDOG, KING LEONARDO, and TENNESSEE TUXEDO.*

TEX: That wasn't **Ward.** That was for Total Television. So we were doing more stuff for Total Television than for **Ward.** That was all for PAT, Producers Associates Television.

LOU: *Yeah, when I was watching the shows when I was a kid, I knew there was some kind of connection between Jay Ward and those other shows, but I never could figure it out.*

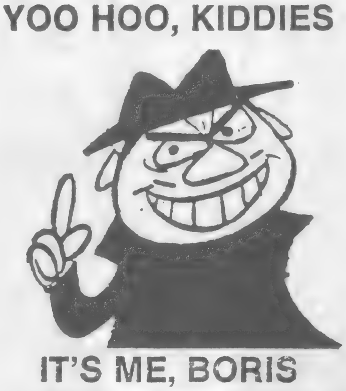
TEX: They took their style from **Ward,** but **Ward** was not involved in that. See, **Ward** didn't want it down there, and he did everything he could to sabotage it. He sent the worst people down there for the seven years that BULLWINKLE was in production. Now, I'll tell you an interesting thing, and this is really behind the scenes.

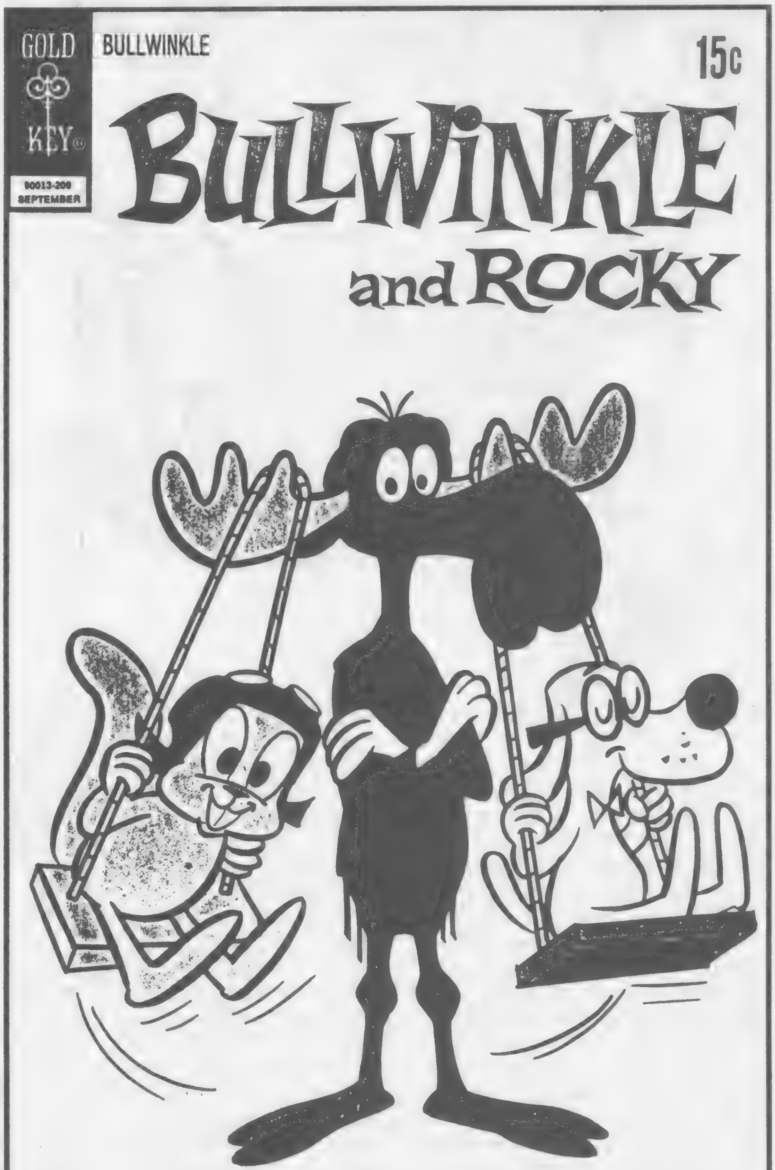
LOU: *Go.*

TEX: BULLWINKLE was painted with house paint.

LOU: *House paint?*

TEX: House paint! You see, back in the old days we used tempera on cels, and hoped it wouldn't pop off before you got it shot, you know. *(Laughter.)* And **Disney** spent a great deal of money trying to find a way to keep the paint on the cels. But there were a couple of paint mixers at MGM's cartoon studio, and they came up with Celvinyl. And they went into business as Celcolor. That's the reason it has a Culver City address. So everybody was using Celvinyl. Of course, what you gain here you lose there. In the old days, when you used tempera and wrecked the cell, you could wipe it off and do it again. Celvinyl won't come off like that.





LOU: *You scrape it off.*

TEX: You can't scrape it off. You can't do anything with it. You just redo the whole thing. But it stayed on the cell. So down in Mexico, they were not going to spend money for Celvinyl. See, what we had to do was to work out a drop. The reason we had to have a drop to pick up and send off stuff was because if you had to go through customs, it was chaos. So what happened was, we were having to do it the old way, with tempera. Meanwhile there was a guy down there named **Frank Hirsch,** who was a fine artist. He was married to a Mexican girl. And of course, Frank didn't have any money, so he experimented with painting with house paint. Vinyl house paint. So when they set up this big unit down there, Frank was recruited by the background department. So he came up with his house paint, and that's what they were using to paint the backgrounds with. Somebody said, “Hey, why don't we see if this stuff will stay on the cells?” So they painted it all with house paint. This is the reason that Rocky was blue. *(Laughter.)* We didn't have a wide rangeof colors, and that was the closest we could come to gray for a squirrel.

Also, the thing with ink: for seven years, it was inked with a brush. Brush inking is really supposed to be highly specialized. The whole staff could ink

“BULLWINKLE, commercials—different propositions.”

anything with a brush. So, when they set up the second studio, **Harvey Siegel,** who'd been our director at Gamma, came home with me. He's the one who'd been the first art director down there. So I said to Harvey, “Will you tell me why BULLWINKLE was inked with a brush?” And Harvey said, “Well, I thought that's the way you did it.” He'd been working for **James Culhane** in New York on commercials, and he was doing it with a brush for his technique. And when he came down there, he thought that that's what you did. So I said, “I've got something in my bag you really ought to take a look at. Rapidograph pens, that's what we're using.” So they had to spend a fortune in brushes, because a brush has a very short life. But they were making so much money nobody even cared.

And in my studio, which I set up from scratch, from bare walls, we got Rapidograph pens for the staff. Plus the fact, because it was a commercial and the client's jewel, they would buy Celvinyl for the Trix rabbit. They wouldn't do it for BULLWINKLE; they would for the Trix rabbit. So we fixed up a drop, up in McAllen, and got Celvinyl and Rapidograph pens.

LOU: *Tell me about working on the Trix rabbit commercials.*

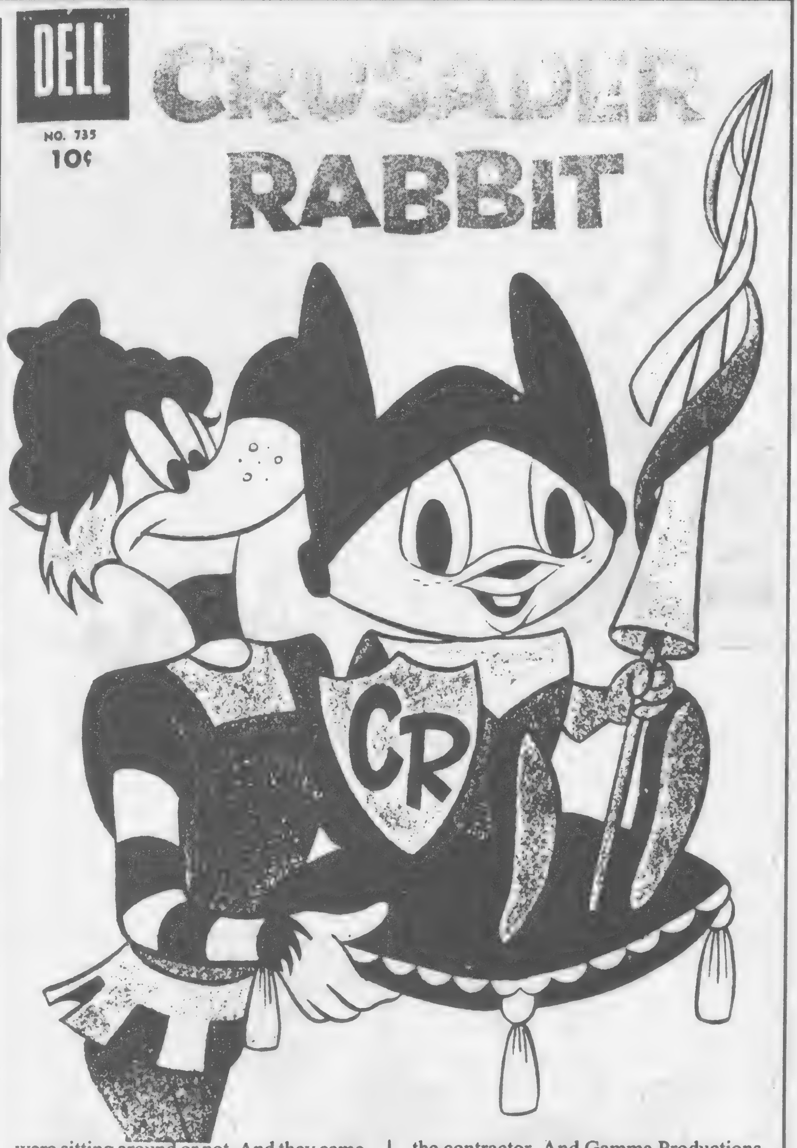
TEX: See, you gotta understand the mechanics of this thing: Hanna-Barbera offered HUCKLEBERRY HOUND to General Mills first. And General Mills turned it down. Of course, Kellogg's took it and had a big success. Now everybody's got to have a cartoon show. So they're looking around for a thing, and here's **Jay Ward** with this BULLWINKLE thing. **Jay Ward** had done CRUSADER RABBIT before, with a rabbit and a tiger. Well, this Bullwinkle was the same formula, only it was a squirrel and a moose. Now, **Ward** was trying to find someplace to place this thing, and General Mills didn't know the difference, so they bought it.

BULLWINKLE did not sell breakfast food. And the people who watched BULLWINKLE do not eat breakfast food.

LOU: *Because they were adults, yeah.**

**Pure speculation, as your interviewer knows. He watched ROCKY AND HIS FRIENDS and BULLWINKLE religiously before he got out of knee pants.*

TEX: Plus the fact that it had very little value for toys and so forth. It doesn't make good point-of-sale images, or anything. I remember when somebody from New York would come down every now and then to check on us, see whether we were sitting around or not. And they came in one time and said, “You know how much money Bullwinkle made in enterprises last year?” I said, “No, how much? . . . A million dollars!” Boy, I should fall on the floor. In the same year, Mickey Mouse alone made 15 million, and Hanna-Barbera characters made 13 million. But BULLWINKLE made a million dollars.



LOU: *I did my part, by gosh. I had a BULLWINKLE lunch box.* (Laughter.)

TEX: So, anyway, they were going around looking for a place. Now the guys at General Mills had figured, well, if anybody's gonna spend the money with anybody, it may as well be us. So they set up a dummy thing, PAT, and got one of their salesmen, **Peter Piech***, to head up PAT. On the books, it was PAT who was the contractor. And Gamma Productions, which was a Mexican cartoon studio, subcontracted work from the States. But in reality, Gamma was owned by PAT, which was owned by General Mills. And the bank account was in Switzerland. *(Laughter.)*

**Astute Bullwinkle viewers will recognize him as the source for Captain Peter “Wrong Way” Peachfuzz's name.*

LOU: *Sounds like Watergate, here.*

TEX: So the thing that first hit 'em was, they had this show going and they were paying for this staff anyway, why don't we just go ahead and do our commercials down there? And they tried 'em out. The idea was, they were going to tie in some of the characters being animated down there in Mexico with the product, in commercials. Well, BULLWINKLE and com-

“I couldn't dra bit worth a damn.”

mercials were two different propositions. The animation in BULLWINKLE was nothing. In fact, the Mexicans thought BULLWINKLE was a piece of junk. *(Laughter.)* Because it wasn't Disney animation, they didn't understand the humor, and they didn't know about the impact it was making back in the states.

LOU: *It was very verbal, very intellectual, yeah.*

TEX: So they got away with what they could get away with, and made a lot of money. So anyway, they found out that it wasn't gonna work. So they decided to set up a second unit down there to do commercials for the States, and to open up the Mexican market. And that's when I was sent down the second time. And I sat down and I set that place up from scratch. The placement of the desk, the paint on the desk, everything. And I trained everybody. That was the most efficient animation studio ever set up in this business. 'Cause I used the best of every studio that I had worked for, and I set up one of the most efficient units that's ever been set up. And our agency was said to have come closer to the agency's concept of the Trix rabbit, on a trial. See, we got the Trix rabbit down there, they wanted to try us out on one or two, and if we didn't make it, we were flat on our face, it was over.

Harvey Siegel, who was supposed to be production manager when we set up the thing, he's having an affair. And he's ducking his wife and hopping in and out of bed with this gal. And here I am, a bush-league animator, sitting there. And I've got one assistant they sent over from Gamma. I've got one background man, one layout man, one inker and one painter. That's the nucleus from which we're going to build. And I'm sitting there and thinking, “If I fall on my face, it's over. Well, just don't sit there, do something.” And I went to work.

Now, the first thing they had for us was the double-bounce walk. And I had never animated a double-bounce walk. But I spent one whole Saturday throwing stuff in the wastebasket, and I ended up with one of the best double-bounce walks that's ever been seen. Well, we sent the first pencil reel up to the States. Didn't know what was going to happen. Got a phone call; they were doing handstands. And we were in! We became the Trix rabbit unit for Dancer-Fitzgerald. And I came out smelling like a rose, not only as an animator but as an administrator, and it really took me by surprise. *(Laughter.)*

Well, let me tell you something.

LOU: *You can tell me anything.*

TEX: The whole time I was working on the Trix rabbit, I couldn't draw that rabbit worth a damn. Fortunately, I had an assistant who could draw it. So I could animate it, and he could draw it. *(Laughter.)* So I am out in Forney, Texas, and I've got a trailer out there. I noticed the Forney paper does job printing. And I know that the job printer sometimes needs artwork, so I took my samples around. First thing you know, I'm doing stuff for the paper. The theme of the paper was a jackrabbit, because the Forney Jackrabbits; that's the name of the high school football team. So anyway, I went in there one day, and they said, “Look, we're not getting any letters. We need a column head for the letter column.” So I drew a rabbit gesturing, and called it “Forney Forum.” Now, I wanted to see what the column looked like, with the rabbit on it, so I went home and wrote a letter about horseracing in Texas, which was a sensation. And we got such feedback on the thing, they asked me, “Why don't you write a column?” And I wrote a column for the paper for eight years. But that rabbit that I drew in that thing was a perfect drawing of the Trix rabbit. When somebody saw that, they said it was the best Trix rabbit drawing they'd ever seen, and I've been drawing the Trix rabbit ever since. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *That's a great one. So, at Total Television, were you involved in UNDERDOG, TENNESSEE TUXEDO, and all of those things, or was that not your bailiwick?*

TEX: We were doing them.

LOU: *Yeah, one of my favorite cartoons when I was a kid was UNDERDOG.*

TEX: Well, the thing is like with the BULLWINKLE SHOW, the storyboards and the soundtrack came down from the States, and we produced it down there with the staff. That's what we were doing. The things that came out of that Mexican studio were BULLWINKLE, UNDERDOG, KING LEONARDO, TENNESSEE TUXEDO, and, later, HOPPITY

“Limited animation takes as much skill as full.”

HOOPER. And that last thing, **Ward** didn't want it down there. I can understand what happened.

See, Ward sold these ideas to General Mills, and he was picturing some way that they would fund the studio. But they didn't. They went looking for someplace to produce it, and Ward still just had his story staff. Of course, by the time they had done all that stuff, he finally had the money to do GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE in Hollywood. He didn't send that to Mexico, but he did HOPPITY HOOPER and the BULLWINKLE SHOW in Mexico. We were always doing the stuff for Total Television.

Plus there were other things that they did. All sorts of things were tried. A few short episodes were made of various things. We had something about two Indians.

LOU: *Was that the GO! GO! GOPHERS?*

TEX: The GO! GO! GOPHERS. They didn't do too many of them, but we did 'em.

LOU: *And The Beagles?*

TEX: Yeah, we did The Beagles. I was working on all of that stuff, directing and such.

LOU: *All this talk of cartoon characters and cereals made me wonder: were you involved in that Post thing they did, Linus the Lionhearted?*

TEX: No, that was down in Hollywood.

LOU: *Okay. It seemed like Post Cereals got into it a little late.*

TEX: I knew a lot of the guys working on it. That was Sheldon Leonard's thing.

LOU: *(imitating Sheldon) He was the voice of Linus the Lionhearted.*

TEX: Of course, **Wally Cox** was Hoppity Hooper the frog, and **Don Adams** was Tennessee Tuxedo,

LOU: *Was it fun, after you had finished the animation, to see the finished product later on and hear those famous voices come back at you from the soundtrack?*

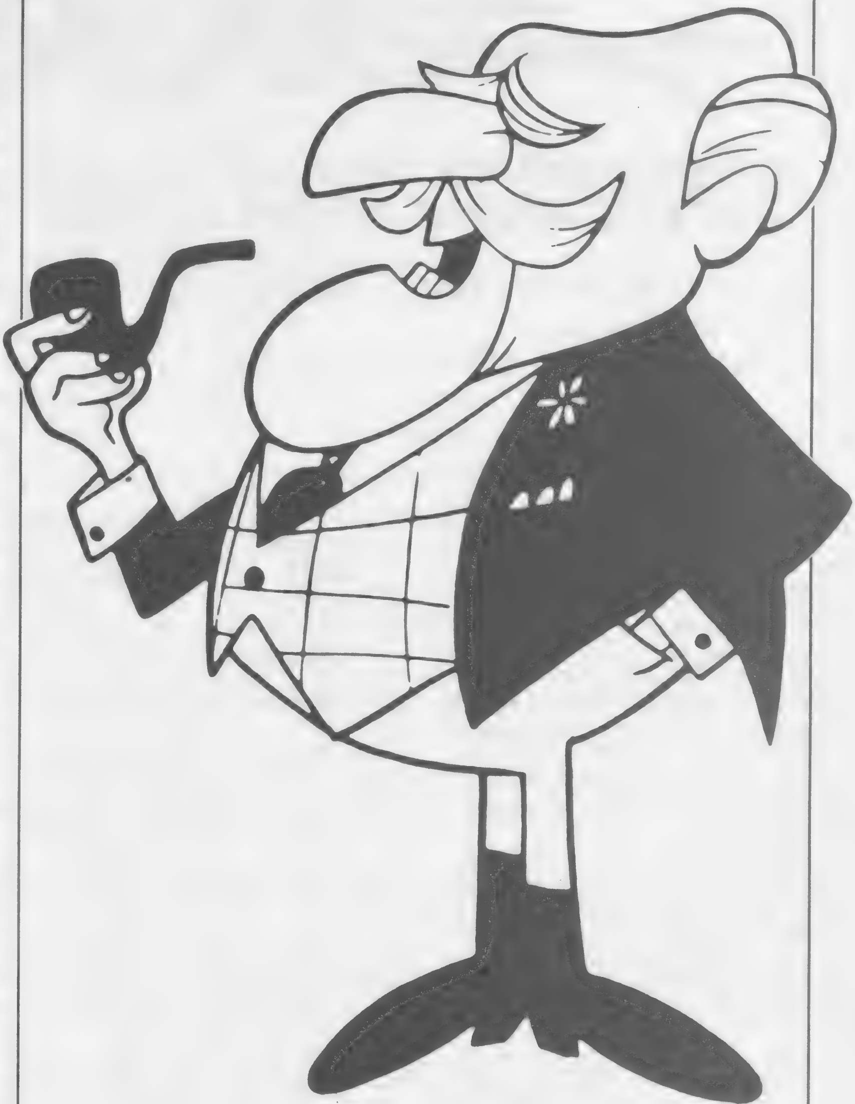
TEX: I tell you, it sounds like a ball, but it was just a job. There really wasn't too much chance to get enthusiastic about that stuff, because I'll tell you, to do limited animation takes just as much training and skill as it does to do full animation. And I'm very good at doing limited animation, because that's what we did in the middle part of the country. And that's why I was uniquely suited to do that down there. But I can't remember getting a kick out of it. I was interested in seeing, did it come off, and should we have done something different, and so forth.

Just like when people are talking about Chip and Dale, the Rescue Rangers, you know. People say, “Well, doesn't that bother you?” And I say, “No.” *(Laughter.)* No, it doesn't bother me.

LOU: *How could it?*

TEX: It's not like some of these guys with their comic book characters and so forth, they're pretty protective of it. But we just did the job. But what you really get a kick out of is if you do something that comes off. You try for something and it works. You can look at it over and over again. But there's been a lot of things that I've done that I didn't particularly care if I never saw again. *(Laughter.)*

I remember I did a thing for the Children's Workshop out of New York, I did it here. It was a thing to teach the word “Walk.” And it had this car in the cross-town traffic, going back and forth. Then the light changes and one set of cars stop, and another set of cars goes across the intersection. Then the word “Walk” comes on, and the cars get up on their hind wheels and walk across the street. *(Laughter.)* And of course, we didn't have sound, because they did that on tape up in New York. And I didn't have any stakes in that thing at all. I said, “Boy, if they'll just take it.” I didn't even bother to



Commander McBragg appeared regularly on the HOPPITY HOOPER show.

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go see the answer print, to see how it looked. New York called down here, and they were doing handstands about it. One of the greatest things they’d ever gotten out of here. And they got a lot more work down here, because of that particular film. So I’m going, “Boy, I wish I could see that again!” *(Laughter.)*

But, see, sometimes it fools you. For instance, I did a thing for Colgate. Down in Mexico, they pronounce it “Col-GAH-tay.” I used to argue with them. They were very big on *nomino propio,* and I said, “What are you gonna do when Mr. Colgate comes down here? Are you gonna call him Señor Colgahtay?” And they said, “Oh, no! He’ll be Señor Colgate, but the product is Colgahtay.”

So we did an animated opening for the **Dick Clark** thing, and I didn’t like this stuff, and I said, “Boy, I’m looking forward to seeing this.” Those kids in the cartoon looked like they had lead in their shoes. It didn’t come off at all. Lots of times you get fooled. I tell you, I have never minded doing stuff over, because you get a chance to fix it. ’Cause down there we don’t have pencil tests, we don’t get a chance to monkey with. We do it good enough. When I went to work on Bullwinkle, the first words I heard were, “You won’t get a pencil test!” And I said, “I haven’t had a pencil test in ten years!” *(Laughter.)* And I hadn’t, either. From Colorado Springs in Dallas, I hadn’t had a pencil test. I learned about rough timing. And guys who’d come from the Coast, none of them knew how to operate in this market. They were used to the idea of doing very specialized work, and running a pencil test, and keep on polishing. And they don’t have that luxury down here.

In Mexico, we had 24-hour-a-day staff, three shifts. And, as we’d found out in Colorado Springs. It was cheaper to go ahead and finish the film and then fix it, rather than shoot a pencil test. Because to plot stuff for a pencil test, you had to set up a lot of stuff. And we were ahead on times just doing it and then fixing it. But New York would not go for it. “No, that’s not professional.” They gotta have a pencil test. So we had to do a pencil test for New York.

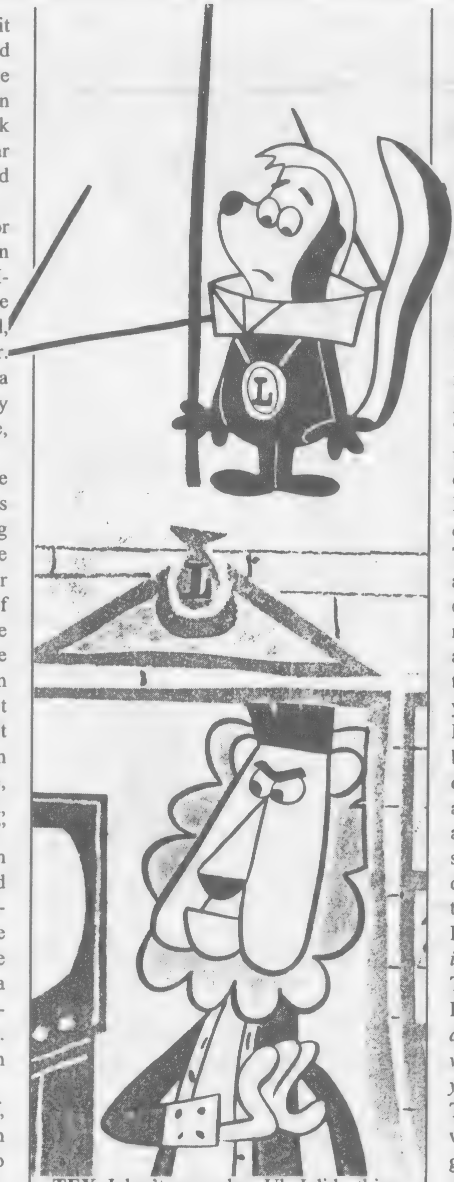
LOU: *Yeah. Make them happy.*

TEX: *(Laughter.)* We would have been way ahead without it.

LOU: *That wasn’t the way their* minds worked. So, you’re still somewhat active in animation?

TEX: Yes.

LOU: *That’s cool. What’s the latest thing you’ve done?*



TEX: I don’t remember. Uh, I did a thing up in Chillicothe, Illinois. Now, get this: up there they have duck hunters. And there’s a little card you’ll see going into town. And what they wanted was a duck they could use as a logo. But they don’t have a duck. So I’ve got to create a duck before I can animate it. Now, what they got out of that package, before they got the animation, was a logo character they could use on their billboards and their invoices and so forth, for the price of that one commercial. I had to design the duck and animate it, and everybody said it looked good. But I didn’t get to see it, because I was in Terrell at the time, and I just had to get the feedback from the people who finished it up.

I’ve been trying to train a staff, and we were set up on Harry Hines Boulevard here in Dallas, and I was with **Mark Stokes.** You know him, right?

LOU: *Oh, yeah. Mark Stokes I know.*

TEX: We were trying to set-up something. Then the people who owned the building sold the building. They were going to close the building, so we put all our stuff in storage and moved out. And one thing or another gets in the way, so we keep circling in and out. The thing I’ve got in mind now is, see, they’ve got this tour going through Las Colinas, the business community. And I’m thinking about going out to Las Colinas and telling them, “How’d you like to have an animation unit?” They can say they have a **Disney** employee! *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Right!* (Laughter.) *I hope it comes off.*

TEX: It’d be a perfect place to set up an animation unit, because they have all the equipment. They have the sound equipment, and so forth. What we’re talking about is trying to do some children’s things. For instance, about three or four years ago we did a thing called “Easter Egg Morning.” It had a **Bobby Goldsboro** soundtrack out of Nashville, and we did the animation here. I did my part over at Brookhaven. So I guess they still run it at Easter time, and I guess they had some sort of enterprise connected with it. But I don’t know anything about that. You do these things, and . . .

LOU: *They leave your hands, and that’s it.*

TEX: Yeah.

LOU: *Okay, Tex, since we’re winding down somewhat, I wanted to ask you: what’s given you the most pleasure out of your animation career?*

TEX: Oh, let me tell you, the big kick was working at Disney’s. It gave me a good foundation to come out with. But the place I had the most fun working at was Famous, Paramount’s cartoon studio.

LOU: *Doing Casper?*

TEX: Yes, Casper. That’s the place where I had the most fun. They were a rowdy bunch over there, the old **Max Fleisher** outfit.

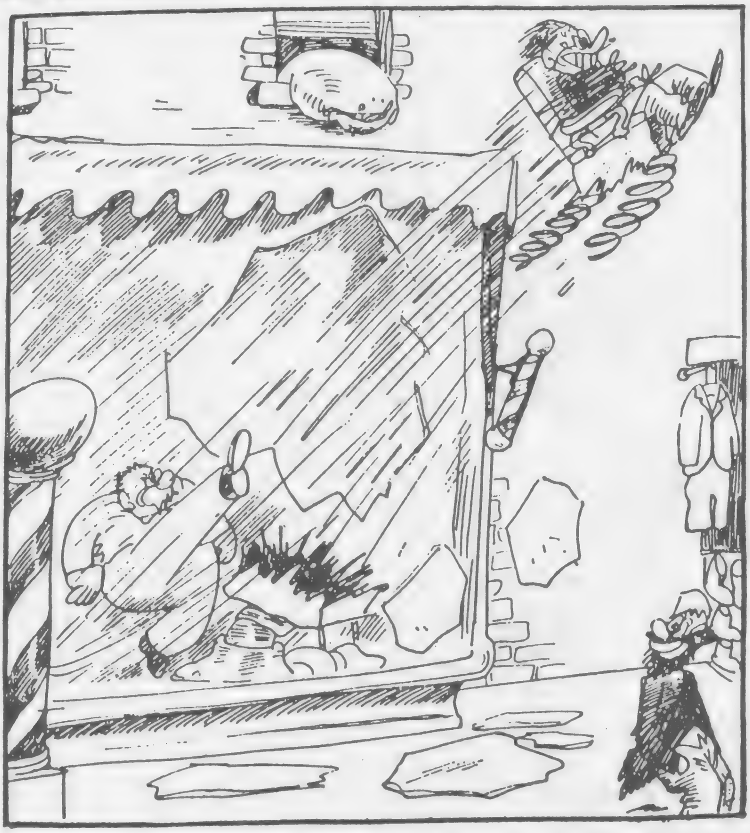
LOU: *So are there any stories you can tell me about those guys?*

TEX: In a minute. But the drawing I enjoyed doing the most was Bullwinkle.

When I was a kid, my idol was **Milt Gross.** I loved **Milt Gross’s** stuff, and I used to copy it all the time. We were kind of a **Milt Gross** cult. But I despaired of ever getting a chance to use that with anything I was involved in. Because **Milt Gross** is of a certain era, and it became

“Tex Avery would drive you nuts. You wait for fireworks

Here and facing page: a tiny sample of the manic humor of Milt Gross. This is part of a much longer sequence, which in turn is only a single incident in Gross's 1930 graphic novel, *He Done Her Wrong: The Great American Novel Told Without Words.*



old hat, and so forth. And there was nowhere I could use it, and I had to draw in a lot of different styles, not **Milt Gross's.** And I met **Milt Gross** at Disney's, by the way. Here's what gets me: people have convex or concave personalities. Convex are people who are very retiring and shy. Concave are people like me, who are exuberant. Now, **Tex Avery,** for instance, was a convex personality. Tex would drive you nuts. So you keep waiting for the fireworks, and he's very soft-spoken: all the fireworks were on paper. Well, it was the same way with **Milt Gross.** Very shy, always stuck at nine to nothing. On paper, he'd go really nuts. But **Gross** was this little shy guy.

But I despaired of ever getting a chance to do this crazy stuff, until here came BULLWINKLE. BULLWINKLE, bug-eyed, cross-eyed, zany stuff.

LOU (doing Bullwinkle): *Yuh. Gee, Rock.* (Laughter.)

TEX: And so, I embraced it, and I've been drawing like that ever since. Because I have reached the age now where, to hell with it, I'm gonna draw the way I like to. I've had to draw like everybody else. I would say that three-fourths of my career, I drew things that were designed by other people. I had to adapt. When I went to work at Disney's, the Disney characters were well in place, and when I went to work on BULLWINKLE they'd been going a while. And when I went to work on Casper, he'd been around a while, too.

And on Casper, they had him opposite a little bear, opposite a little dog, and they finally came up with the idea to work in a little boy there, in a kind of continuing series. So I got the job of designing the boy, whom I designed after my cousin Chris, who lived in Breckenridge, Texas.

LOU: *I'm not too far from there, I live in Graham.*

TEX: Well, Chris was that age, and I designed the boy after Chris. And the people in Breckenridge knew about this, so any time the cartoons with the little boy would come out, they'd all go down to the movie house and see Chris in the cartoons. But, just being facetious, I said, "Well, they ought to name the boy after me, since I designed him." He was called something else. And do you know what? To this day, I'm astounded. They changed the soundtrack to where the little boy's name would be Billy, which was my kid name. They went to the expense of redoing that soundtrack, doctoring it up so that the boy's name would be Billy. I never dreamed that they would do that. **Stanley Sayre** was in charge of that thing, and I could never conceive of him spending the money for that. But I was pretty popular back there; I could get away with a lot of stuff.

LOU: *Yeah, I remember somebody in THE COMICS JOURNAL, reviewing cartoons, singled out the early Caspers for a lot of praise.*

TEX: The funny thing is, I was very popular. And I never was a member of any factions or anything like that. And I remember, with the advent of TV, they decided at Famous that they would set up a separate unit to do commercials. So they would pick the animators for the new unit to be assistants, that would be the chance to move up. And there was a lot of

and he's soft-spoken: the fireworks were on paper."

bitterness among those who were passed over against those who got them. A lot of jealousy. Well, I was one of the ones who started the thing, and I got picked out. And nobody was mad at me. They were all happy for me and so forth, and I didn't get it. So I asked **Howard Smith,** "I don't get it. Why are all these guys mad at these other people, and not mad at me?" He said, "Well, Tex, they knew that if you had been passed over, it would never had occurred to you that you should have been chosen, and you'd have been happy for them. So they're happy for you." That's the kind of relationship I've always had with the people I've worked with.

LOU: *That's good.*

TEX: I mean, even down in Mexico, my staff — I really would have preferred them to have loyalty for the company, but the staff's loyalty was for me. I was the real patroon. But I kept my promise to those guys. I went to the front office, and I said to the men, "I'll get your ratings raised, I'll get you a raise, and so forth." And they didn't want to do it, but I fought for my guys. And something else — other guys wanted to put the blame on other guys when something went wrong. I took the heat for my department. I didn't blame anybody. I'd take the heat, then I'd come back and just butt heads with the bunch of 'em. And I gained their loyalty. Because I'd say, "You put me on the spot," and I'd bawl 'em out. But as far as the front office went, we were a solid unit, because I protected my boys. And they had never seen anything like that in Mexico. And I gave credit to whoever gave the work, and some of the other animators from other studios didn't like that, because they didn't want to have to do that. But that's the way I always ran my unit.

And they wanted to work around the clock. But I made 'em quit at ten o'clock at night, no matter where we were, because if they didn't that would kill their efficiency for the next day. The only time we would ever stay past ten at night was when we were coming down to the wire, and after we finished it we would go home.

I was a pretty successful director, and I got quite a bit of recognition for it from the states, from Dancer-Fitzgerald.

LOU: *Can you tell me when and where you were born, for the vital statistics?*

TEX: I was born in Dallas, Texas, July 20, 1924. Some people ask me what brought me to Dallas, and I said, "The stork!" *(Laughter.)* The thing is, talking about statistics: I missed one of the biggest stories of World War II.

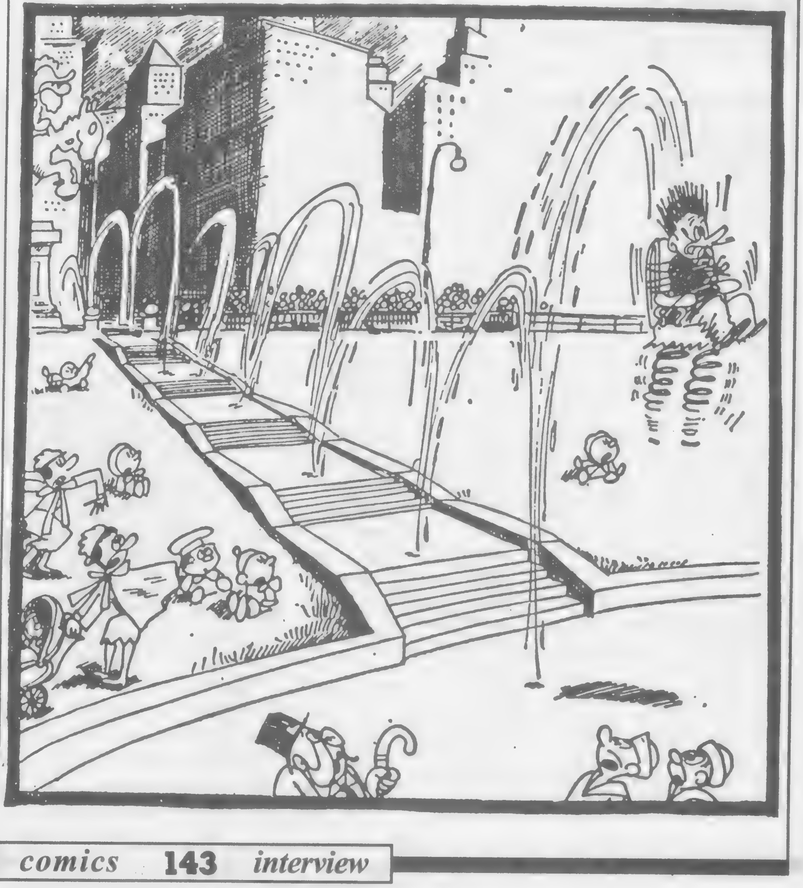
LOU: *Which was?*

TEX: D-Day. Normandy. Because D-Day was my D-Day. That was the day I went to Disney's for an interview. And afterward, I didn't know up. *(Laughter.)* And I saw the headlines in the paper, but nothing registered, because I didn't come down for three days, and by then it was all over.

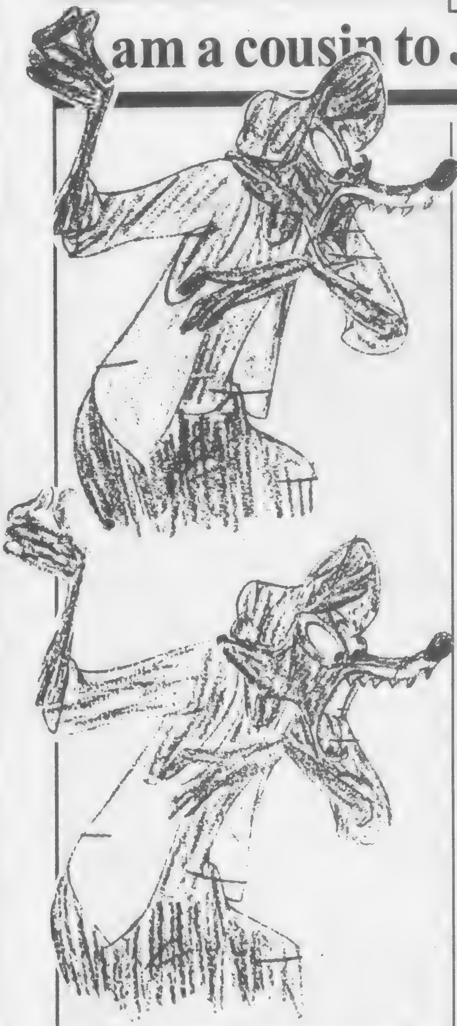
And they introduced me at the Harvey Awards as a "veteran animator." I said, "My God, I've joined the Hall of Kings." But I finally got an idea on how much of a veteran I am, which is fifty years, because it was the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day. *(Laughter.)* So that really brought that home.

LOU: *How about your family configuration?*

TEX: Well, I don't have any kids, and I don't have a wife anymore. My family's all gone. There is a family plot. My mother's there, my father's there, and my sister's there. There's one space left. And at my sister's funeral, we're standing



am a cousin to Jim Henson, the Muppets creator."



Ollie Johnson did these sketches of Br'er Fox, from SONG OF THE SOUTH — Disney's first major foray into live action.

around, and my nephew's wife said, "You know, there's one place left there . . ." *(Laughter.)* "You better let somebody know about that so they can keep it standing for you." And I said, "I don't need that today!" *(Laughter.)*

You might be interested in this thing: I am a cousin to **Jim Henson,** the Muppets creator, who passed on. We never met, because we were always in different parts of the world. But we had the same approach to character design, and the same force to move in. Now, my nephew was raised on the legend of his Uncle Billy and **Walt Disney.** And my grand-nephew had been raised on the same legend. And any time they see me, they run to me with their drawings and show me, and so forth. Well, a couple of years back, my nephew got a promotion, and his company was sent to Springfield, Missouri, where he's now living. And the school his boys are enrolled in there is Walt Disney Elementary. Now, wouldn't you know that my nephew would be enrolled in Walt Disney Elementary? *(Laughter.)* And they have a big picture of Walt just hanging up there in the classroom. That's just too pat.

And of course, **Jim Henson's** bunch has just joined forces with the Disney organization. Everything keeps circling in.

LOU: *Right. It's all in the same neighborhood, and it all eventually comes together, I guess. What's your favorite piece of work that you ever did?*

TEX: I think it was in MICKEY AND THE BEANSTALK. In the gelatin sequence, where the Goof is chasing his hat. I think that's my favorite.

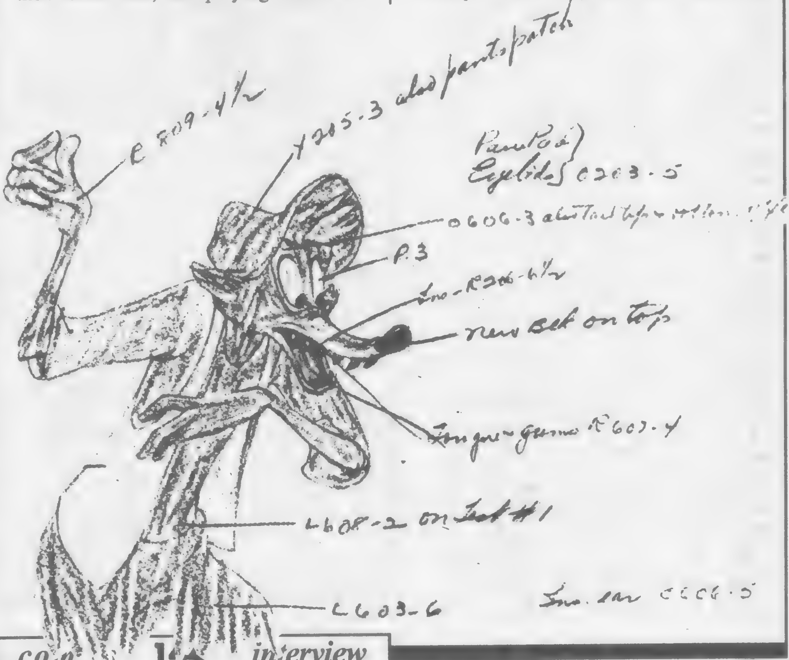
LOU: *And the last question I always ask people is the Pet Peeves. What's your Pet Peeve about animation?*

TEX: Well, I don't know. I don't really have a Pet Peeves about animation. I never made much money, and a lot of people think that in this business that you make a whole lot of money, but you don't. Comics artists don't make all that much money. I worked on SONG OF THE SOUTH, which signalled Disney's entry into live-action.

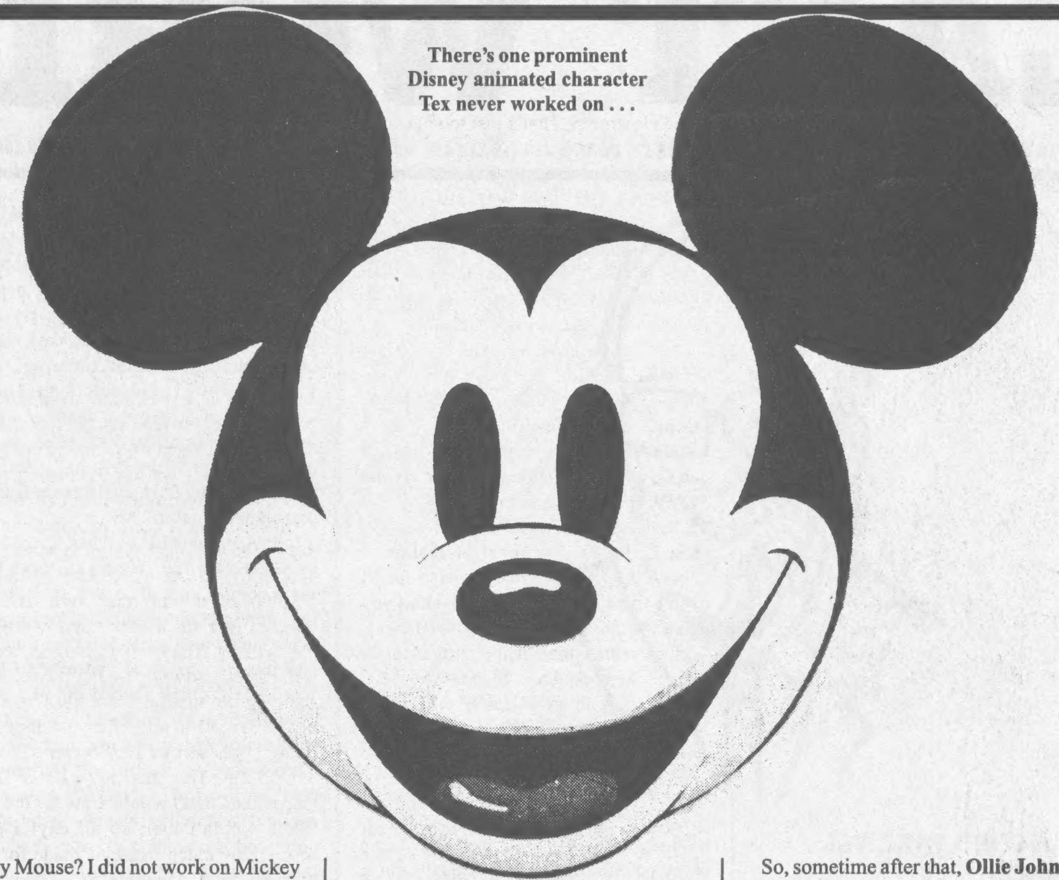
LOU: *Yeah, that was live-action and animation.*

TEX: That was where Disney's interest really was, in the live-action films. Suddenly, we had live-action people on the lot, and we'd never had that before, They were making more money than we were making. And some of the guys kinda got their nose out of joint about that. So when we were out for noon break, over on the lawn **Luana Patten** and **Bobby Driscoll,** the two kid stars, were playing. One of the guys cocked his head and said, "How come they're making more money than we're making? We're the stars of this place." And just being facetious, being funny, you know, I said, "Well, it takes a whole bunch of us to turn out a foot of film, and it'll only take the two of them to do it, and they're splitting their salary among us." And all of a sudden, everybody felt better about the whole thing. *(Laughter.)* They said, "Gee, I never thought about that. I guess that's so."

I don't know. I suppose I could think of things that would give you a better kick, but I got a kick out of that, up at Disney. And I was working as an assistant to **Woolie Reitherman,** who was one of the greats. I'll tell you an interesting story: **Woolie Reitherman** was one of the Nine Old Men. Now, I was living in Terrell for ten years. I stepped out of the parade. Felt like I'd escaped. *(Laughter.)* And the Friends of the Library were having a fund-raising for a new library, down at the armory. They were going to auction off original artwork by the locals, sell it through an auction off a car. And they asked me if I would draw for donations. Well, I was sort of a character to get the crowd out. They had my picture in the paper, said that I would draw for the kids. Well, I didn't look up all day! I don't know how much money I made for 'em, but I would have starved except that people would bring me something to eat. And I was turning out pictures as fast as I could. Well, nine out of ten requests I got were for Mickey Mouse. Now, would you believe it was possible to work in Disney's that long and not work on



“Woolie Reitherman couldn’t draw Mickey any better than I.”



There’s one prominent Disney animated character Tex never worked on . . .

Mickey Mouse? I did not work on Mickey Mouse. I think the whole time I was there, I may have worked on one scene with Mickey, because we weren’t doing too many with him. And the first few that came in for him kinda got gypped! Because they’re going to talk to this Disney artist, and they’re going to take home a drawing and put it on the wall. And the first Mickeys I did were pretty bad. But as the day progressed, I kinda got my hand in, and I began to turn out not a great Mickey, but an adequate Mickey. And I used up all my black markers, because Mickey takes a lot of black.

Now, three months pass, and they’re having the USA Film Festival, which is one of the major film festivals. And that year they’re having it out at Bob Hope Theater. And the last day they’re having a Disney seminar, and they had a film introducing the new animators, you know, the new breed. And they were gonna show SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS in its entirety, I guess they hadn’t done that in awhile, and they would have some guest speakers. Well, I wasn’t part of the program. But being an elder statesman, I was invited and I got to go free. And one of the guest speakers was **Woolie Reitherman.** And I was Woolie’s assistant on MICKEY AND THE BEANSTALK. And I didn’t know he was gonna be there. Well, the last thing on the schedule was SNOW WHITE, and Woolie and I had seen that, so we didn’t need to do that. So we sat out in the lobby and had a visit. And while we’re sitting, this kid comes up with a program and wants us to autograph it and draw him a picture. So Woolie autographed it and drew a picture of Mickey Mouse, and I was very gratified to see that this master animator, one of the Nine Old Men at Disney’s, couldn’t draw Mickey any better than I could. *(Laughter.)* His Mickey was just as bad as mine, and I went home feeling better about a lot of things.

Now, to continue: I was writing a column out in Terrell for the Forney newspaper. And anytime they would come out with a cartoon at Disney’s, I was on the mailing list, because I could do a column on it, you know. So I got this pressbook on SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS. Now, I didn’t need any information on SNOW WHITE, but I thought that I’d read through this thing, see if I can pick up a few phrases, save myself some time. And I ran across a quote from the *late* **Woolie Reitherman.** And I said, “Gee, I didn’t know Woolie’d died.”

So, sometime after that, **Ollie Johnston** and **Frank Thomas** came to town. They were the ones who got to write the books, you know, they’re animators emeritus. And at the time they had a place here called the Circle Gallery, which had the contract from Disney Art. And the Circle Gallery held a reception for them while they were in town, and I went over. I wouldn’t have known it was them, except that I knew it was them. But when I walked in, they jumped up and said, “Hey, you’re the guy we haven’t seen in a long time!” They recognized me right off the bat. So we had a visit. And before I left, I said, “By the way, did **Woolie Reitherman** die?” They said, “Yes, Woolie’s gone now.” And I said, “Well . . . how did he die?” ’Cause you know, when you get to be my age, it kinda looms large. You start to worry about stuff. And I picture Woolie in this hospital room with a sheet up to his chin, and the shade half-drawn and all, passing away from old age or whatever. I said, “How did he die?” They said, “He was killed in an automobile accident.” I said, “Well, that’s all right.” *(Laughter.)* That’s the way he would have wanted to go.

LOU: (Laughter.) *That’s a good one. And, Tex, that’s a hell of a one to end up on.*

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

Art: Jim Salicrup

A FOND FAREWELL

Dear Readers:

I've got a copy of the first issue of COMICS INTERVIEW on the desk near at hand, and despite the intervening dozen years and all the many issues in between, memories of nearly every aspect of putting together and launching that prototype remain fresh and vividly clear in my mind.

At the time, while not actually on staff at Marvel Comics, I had "most favored freelancer" status, with an office of my own on the executive floor around the corner from Marvel's then-publisher **Jim Galton,** and was in charge of putting together the new Marvel Books division under v-p (and great guy) **Sol Brodsky.**

This was in 1982, when **Carol Kalish** was still a fresh new face there, not long after Marvel moved downtown from 575 Madison Avenue to the somewhat seedy building at 387 Park Avenue South, and the adventure of creating a new magazine of my own occupied my imagination.

Looking back at INTERVIEW #1, I remember the excitement of striding briskly down Park Avenue with a portfolio of finished paste-ups under my arm, "the young publisher," and the anxiety of wondering whether my not inconsiderable investment of time and money would work out or not. The answer is apparent, as we all know by now, since you're holding issue #150 — but there were many such moments and critical turning points over the intervening years.

Such as Black September.

Orders actually dropped sharply for issue #6, with an untopped-to-this-day **George Pérez** DC vs. Marvel heroes cover (the current Marvel vs. DC poster is but a pale shadow) — we had a hot sotry, an exclusive with unseen art on why the JLA/Avengers crossover would never see print — and yet sales stumbled. I thought then that it might all be over, and strongly considered cancelling COMICS INTERVIEW. Fortunately, I stayed the course.

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Then there was the time I returned from a trip to France, sometime soon after issue #25, only to find tens of thousands of dollars in debt awaiting — but next to nothing in the bank. It was a mystery. Impossible. There were some dark nights, indeed, until I found the "missing" cashflow — invested in inventory, paid out to a plethora of artists and suchlike in advance, as I was also at the time expanding into comics publishing. It had ebbed out but would flow back again as soon as the comics were published.

In fact, not much more than a year later, by issue #40, the success of those selfsame comics and, of course, the continuing publication of this magazine, had made such total demands on my time that I seriously considered cancelling COMICS INTERVIEW sheerly out of a sense of self-survival. Instead, I sought the services of operations manager **M. Kay McGonnell** — who played "Burbank" to my "The Shadow" — and whose accounting and scheduling acumen were available and invaluable to the magazine through issue #100, giving it (and me!) a new lease on life.

There was still a "mini-*malaise*" or two along the way, with a market slump just before CI #70, when the first **Tim Burton** BATMAN movie jump-started sales again, and sometime before the final few issues leading up to the legendary COMICS INTERVIEW #100. Then, of course, came the current protracted decline in direct distribution, culminating in the recent market paroxysms that are mentioned in my editorial for this issue.

Through it all, month in and month out, COMICS INTERVIEW has been here.

I have been here.

We have brought you not only "more interviews than any other magazine" in the industry, but also, I believe, a far greater diversity than any other, featuring "interviews with today's top talents, yesterday's legendary greats, and *all* the other people involved in *every* aspect of comics."

Now, it's time to move on. Thanks for being here and making it all possible. I hope to be seeing you again, somewhere soon, just where you least expect it. Until then, *hasta la vista, baby!* I'm outta here.

— David Anthony Kraft
Editor/Publisher
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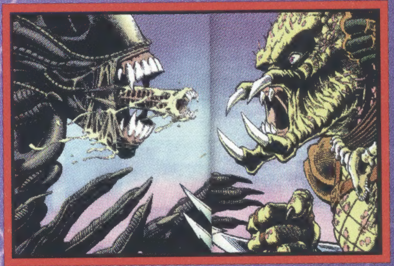

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